

Charles University in Prague
The Faculty of Education
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Current Approaches to English Teacher Education as Reflected in
Trainees' Teaching Practice

Současné přístupy k vzdělávání učitelů anglického jazyka v
reflexi studentských praxí

Diploma thesis

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I declare that I have worked out this diploma thesis myself using only the literature stated.

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Abstract

This work deals with the English language teacher training approaches administered at the Department of English Language and Literature of the Faculty of Education, Charles University in Prague. The work seeks answers to which aspects of teacher competence are developed by each of the approaches. As almost half of the trainees involved in the research had a previous teaching experience, the role of teaching experience on the development of teaching skills is also examined. Teacher trainees' written reflections on their teaching practice are analyzed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The results are related to current trends in teacher education.

Anotace

Práce se zabývá přístupy ke vzdělávání učitelů anglického jazyka používanými na katedře anglického jazyka a literatury Pedagogické fakulty Univerzity Karlovy v Praze. Práce hledá odpovědi na otázku, které aspekty kompetencí učitele jsou rozvíjeny každým ze zmiňovaných přístupů. Vzhledem k tomu, že téměř polovina všech studentů učitelství zahrnutých ve výzkumu měla již předchozí zkušenost s výukou, je zkoumán také vliv zkušenosti s výukou na rozvoj učitelských dovedností. Psané reflexe studentů na pedagogickou praxi jsou podrobeny analýze za použití kombinace kvantitativních a kvalitativních metod. Výsledky jsou dané do souvislosti se současnými trendy ve vzdělávání učitelů.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The subject of this thesis is the current situation of English language teacher education at the Faculty of Education, Charles University in Prague. Teacher education lies behind education as a whole. The question of quality assurance in the Czech education system has drawn a lot of interest among the professional as well as the general public recently. Teacher education is an inevitable part of it. The thesis may serve as a contribution to these discussions.

The objective was to carry out a research which would analyze both teacher training approaches administered at the Department of English Language and Literature in relation to the development of teacher competence. The increased demand for English language teachers on the market provided a great opportunity to compare trainees with regular teaching load and trainees without any other than university-provided teaching practice. Teacher trainees' written reflections on their teaching practice was the main resource material. The professional literature which was used in the seminars of English didactics and methodology served as theoretical background for the analysis of the teacher training approaches. The main asset of the trainees reflections was the fact that the topics and issues for the analysis were raised by the trainees themselves and thus authentic. The trainees were required to include information about their previous teaching experience. Thus one of aims of the thesis was to analyze the role of teaching experience in the process of teacher education. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used to analyze resource materials.

The thesis starts with a theoretical background which provides a brief overview of current trends in teacher education. The second section of the chapter offers a description of the teacher training approaches related to the research and information about the forms in which they were administered in the seminars of English didactics

and methodology. The following chapter states aims of the research and describes methods used for the data analysis, which is the largest part of the thesis. The topics raised by the trainees are analyzed in separate sections. Each of the sections also includes a summary of the findings and conclusions of the topic. An overall interpretation of the findings of the whole research and discussion close the research part. The following chapter offers general conclusions and evaluates the thesis.

Chapter 2

Theoretical background

In the historical development of pedagogy, the centre of attention used to be the results of the teaching process and later the pupils and students themselves. Teacher education began to draw greater attention in the last century, especially in its second half. The development of psychology served as a basis for teacher education theories, which are essentially based on psychological principles of behavioural, humanistic, cultural-historical and developmental approaches to psychology.¹

In the late seventies, the United States established a federal bureau for teacher education research, which led to significant development in this field. As a result, many new approaches to teacher education emerged.² The development was not limited only to the United States and spread internationally.³ Traditional models of teacher education began to be criticised for the lack of integration of theory and practice. Attempts have been made to tackle this issue and alternative approaches introduced innovations like microteaching. However, these efforts stirred criticism which claimed that real experience cannot be substituted. This led to the creation of a number of new approaches which were based on reflective understanding of real teaching situation.⁴ Among the most significant personalities of this development were: D. Shön, D. C. Berliner,⁵ V. K. LaBoskey, D. Freeman,⁶ Hustler, and Shulman.⁷

¹ Duchame, Edward R. and Mary K. Edward. "Teacher Education: Historical Overview." *Encyclopedia of Education: Second Edition*. Ed. James W. Guthrie. MacMillan Reference Library, 2002. 2441-2442.

² Perclová, Radka. "Funkce oborové didaktiky v přípravě učitelů cizích jazyků." *Vzdělávání učitelů cizích jazyků na počátku 21. století*. Ed. Marie Fenclová. Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze - Pedagogická fakulta, 2004. 229.

³ Švec, Vlastimil. *Pedagogická příprava budoucích učitelů: problémy a inspirace*. Brno: Paido, 1999. 9.

⁴ Dunkin, Michael J. "Teacher Education: International perspective." *Encyclopedia of Education: Second Edition*. Ed. James W. Guthrie. MacMillan Reference Library, 2002. 2447.

⁵ Píšová, Michaela. "Podpora procesů profesního rozvoje v pregraduálním vzdělávání učitelů anglického jazyka." *Vzdělávání učitelů cizích jazyků na počátku 21. století*. Ed. Marie Fenclová. Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze - Pedagogická fakulta, 2004. 236.

In the Czech environment, the situation of teacher education was negatively affected by the political development in the last two decades of the 20th century. Although there was a great deal of interest among professionals dedicated to research and development in this field of pedagogy,⁸ there was hardly any progress made on the political and institutional grounds. In this respect, the situation improved especially at the start of the new century.⁹ In recent years, personalities like Kotásek, Spilková, Svatoš, Švec,¹⁰ Walterová, Skalková, Štech¹¹ and others have made crucial contributions to the development of teacher education in the Czech environment.

2.1 Current trends in teacher education

Today, teacher education faces new challenges thanks to the increasingly faster process of globalization and its effects exceeding the field of economics, as globalization evolved into a social and cultural phenomenon.¹² Such development has been primarily propelled by advances in technological research. Thus one of the current trends has emerged to be the integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the process of teacher education.¹³ The question of growing cultural diversity in society should also be reflected.¹⁴ These two areas can be clearly defined and directly related to globalization. Nowadays, teacher education is referred to as ‘professional development’, whereas in the past a more frequent term was ‘teacher training’. The change reflects the complexity of a teacher profession and also its

⁶ Perclová 229.

⁷ Spilková, Vladimíra et al. *Současné proměny vzdělávání učitelů*. Brno: Paido, 2004. 23-24.

⁸ Švec 9.

⁹ Spilková 11.

¹⁰ Švec 9-10.

¹¹ Spilková 16-32.

¹² Dunbar, Muriel. “Teachers and trainers: professionals and stakeholders in the reform of vocational education and training.” *Teacher education in Europe: achievements, trends and prospects*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2006. 13.

¹³ Thomas, Elwyn. “Preface: Dilemmas and prospects unravelled - an overview.” *Teacher Education: Dilemmas and Prospects*. Ed. Elwyn Thomas. London: Kogan Page, 2002.xi.

¹⁴ Thomas, Elwyn. “Toward a culture-sensitive teacher education: the role of pedagogical models.” *Teacher Education: Dilemmas and Prospects*. Ed. Elwyn Thomas. London: Kogan Page, 2002. 167.

professional character.¹⁵ This trend is also reflected by Czech experts in the local context.¹⁶

However, the effect of global changes (including its local forms) is much broader. The increasing diversity in many social aspects demands relevant and effective adjustments in teacher education. Some of the recent reports on initial teacher education show that a high number of teachers leave teaching within the first three years of employment. Beginning teachers are not sufficiently prepared to be able to address learning needs of students.¹⁷

In the European context, the increased importance of teacher education has been answered by the Council of Europe. Its aims are not to create a specific education policy valid for all countries, but rather to define common guidelines based on European values.¹⁸ However, not all attempts in this respect have been successful. For example, the development plan called Lisbon Agenda¹⁹ was to “make the EU the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-driven economy by 2010.”²⁰ Common principles for teacher qualifications and competences were one of its parts.²¹ The plan failed to meet most of its ambitious objectives mainly due to national interests of the EU member states.²²

What appears to have been more influential for teacher education was the launch of the European Higher Education Area in 2010, which introduces three cycle system (bachelor/master/doctorate), quality assurance and recognition of qualifications and

¹⁵ Villegas-Reimers, Eleonora. “Teacher Preparation, International Perspective.” *Encyclopedia of Education: Second Edition*. Ed. James W. Guthrie. MacMillan Reference Library, 2002. 2470.

¹⁶ Spilková 24.

¹⁷ Ure, Christine Leslie. “Reforming teacher education through a professionally applied study of teaching.” *Journal of Education for Teaching* 36.4 (2010): 461-462.

¹⁸ Ólafsdóttir, Ólöf. “The political context for teacher training in the framework of the Council of Europe.” *Teacher education in Europe: achievements, trends and prospects*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2006. 9.

¹⁹ Also known as Lisbon Strategy or Lisbon Process.

²⁰ “Lisbon Agenda.” *EurActiv.com* 21 May 2007. 7 March 2011 <<http://www.euractiv.com/en/future-eu/lisbon-agenda/article-117510>>.

²¹ Cornu, Bernard. “New professional roles and key competences for teachers in Europe.” *Teacher education in Europe: achievements, trends and prospects*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2006. 22.

²² Wyplosz, Charles. “The failure of the Lisbon strategy.” *Vox* 12 January 2010. 7 March 2011 <<http://www.voxeu.org/index.php?q=node/4478>>.

periods of study.²³ The Czech teacher education system is not fully compatible with the three cycle system, which might have a negative effect on the quality of teacher education.²⁴ As the conditions of the European Higher Education Area are valid for all the EU states, adjustments in the Czech higher education system have been done and more are to be expected.

In relation to the aims of this work, I will focus on the didactical aspects of the development of teacher competence in the view of current trends rather than on ICT and cultural issues. The aspects will be dealt with from the international perspective and the Czech perspective.

International perspective

As I have said earlier, there is an increased focus on teacher education, so that teachers become ready to meet the needs of a changing society. In this respect, one of the key questions is the role of authentic teaching experience in the initial teacher education. Let us see some of the findings in recent research projects. A Norwegian study focused on teacher trainees' motivation to become teachers shows that the main reasons are the joy of teaching and the wish to work with young people. Those trainees who were not sure whether they wanted to become teachers rather enrolled in teacher education to have multiple job opportunities. The study sees the danger of not having enough teachers in the future, as students are becoming more ambivalent about their future. What proved to be the most motivating factor for teacher trainees was the practical teaching experience.²⁵ Another Scandinavian study adds that the amount of authentic teaching experience is insufficient in Finnish teacher training programmes and thus teacher trainees are not being sufficiently prepared for work on moral and

²³ The European Higher Education Area was a result of the Bologna Process (also known as Bologna Accords). See "The Bologna Process - Towards the European Higher Education Area." *European Commission: Education & Training* 13 January 2011. 7 March 2011
<http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc1290_en.htm>.

²⁴ Brebera, Pavel. "Boloňský proces a jeho reflexe v přípravném vzdělávání učitelů." *Pedagogika* 56.3 (2006): 258.

²⁵ Roness, Dag and Kari Smith. "Stability in motivation during teacher education." *Journal of Education for Teaching* 36.2 (2010): 178-179.

interpersonal issues. Teacher education should recognize the importance of emotions and incorporate relevant aspects into their courses.²⁶

The trend to put focus on authentic teaching experience is not common only for Scandinavian countries. In Australia, there was a general review of teacher education done between 2005-2007, which proved that graduate teachers should be more 'classroom ready' and 'more able to address the learning needs of students.' The conclusion was made that teacher trainees should spend more time in schools and universities should establish closer partnerships with schools.²⁷ The situation of teacher preparation in the USA is seen as ineffective for a similar reason – disconnection of teacher trainees from the practice in real schools.²⁸ In early 2000s, Israel introduced a new internship programme in teaching at the national level. Teacher trainees carry out their teaching practice simultaneously with their courses at colleges, spending one or two days a week teaching. Also, once or twice a year, trainees get to teach one or two weeks continuously. The practice is accompanied by a reflective feedback provided by college supervisors, classroom teachers and pupils.²⁹

Nonetheless, the increased amount of teaching experience is not sufficient on its own. England may serve as a good example. Since early nineties, teacher education has become essentially school-based, requiring teacher trainees to spend at least two thirds of the 36-week course in the school setting. University departments and schools work in the form of partnerships.³⁰ The problem which has emerged is the question how to help teacher trainees to effectively interpret their teaching experience. This should be the role of university departments, because when the trainees become too reliant on the practices used at their school, they only copy what works for other teachers (especially for their

²⁶ Malm, Birgitte. "Towards a new professionalism : enhancing personal and professional development in teacher education." *Journal of Education for Teaching* 35.1 (2009): 88.

²⁷ Ure 461-462.

²⁸ Howey, Ken and Linda Post. "A comprehensive prototype for urban teacher education in the United States." *Teacher Education: Dilemmas and Prospects*. Ed. Elwyn Thomas. London: Kogan Page, 2002. 219.

²⁹ Zohar, Tikva. "Changing the face of teacher education in Israel: training a professional reflective teacher." *Teacher Education: Dilemmas and Prospects*. Ed. Elwyn Thomas. London: Kogan Page, 2002. 252-254.

³⁰ Ellis, Viv. "Studying the process of change: The double stimulation strategy in teacher education research." *Cultural-Historical Perspectives on Teacher Education and Development: Learning Teaching*. Eds. Viv Ellis, Anne Edwards and Peter Smagorinsky. Abingdon: Routledge, 2010. 103.

mentor).³¹ The weakness of this approach appears to be a too uncritical reliance on mentor teachers and their sufficient experience to tutor teacher trainees. Trainees should be led to learn to interpret why certain practises have worked in particular situations, whereas in some they haven't. The interpretation of meaning of teaching situations is crucial for teacher trainees to be able to cope with future teaching situations.³²

If we turn back to Scandinavia, a case study done in Finland, which dealt with language teacher education, indicated that teacher trainees were able to make use of the knowledge learned during teacher education only if they were able to use self-reflective skills.³³ Developing a personal notion of how practical knowledge can or can't be used is heavily dependent on whole-life personal experience and not only specifics of the teaching context.³⁴ Thus it is important for teacher trainees to learn to understand and shape their own professional development.

In relation to authentic teaching experience, typically two basic approaches to teacher education are discussed. The terminology differs a lot, but essentially, the approaches reflect the question of balance between the knowledge learned at universities and the knowledge learned in practice during the initial teacher education.³⁵ Henrik Hendeger from Linnaeus University in Sweden points out that the question is not which of the two approaches should prevail, but rather how to effectively combine the approaches for a teacher to be able apply educational theories to school practice. However, this task, as the study proved, is very difficult to be put in practice. The

³¹ Douglas, Alaster. "What and how do student teachers learn from working in different social situations of development in the same school?" *Cultural-Historical Perspectives on Teacher Education and Development: Learning Teaching*. Eds. Viv Ellis, Anne Edwards and Peter Smagorinsky. Abingdon: Routledge, 2010. 43.

³² Ellis, Viv. "Impoverishing experience: the problem of teacher education in England." *Journal of Education for Teaching* 36.1 (2010): 116-117.

³³ Ruohotie-Lyhty, Maria and Pauli Kaikkonen. "The Difficulty of Change: the Impact of Personal School Experience and Teacher Education on the Work of Beginning Language Teachers." *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 53.3 (2009): 306.

³⁴ Smagorinsky, Peter. "A Vygotskian analysis of the construction of setting in learning to teach." *Cultural-Historical Perspectives on Teacher Education and Development: Learning Teaching*. Eds. Viv Ellis, Anne Edwards and Peter Smagorinsky. Abingdon: Routledge, 2010. 16-17.

³⁵ Knowledge-for-practice (or research-based knowledge, technical rationality, the applied science model) as opposed to knowledge-in-practice (experienced-based knowledge, ecological rationality, the reflective model). See Hegender, Henrik. "The Assessment of Student Teachers' Academic and Professional Knowledge in School-Based Teacher Education." *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 54.2 (2010): 151, 167 and Wallace, Michael J. *Training foreign language teachers: a reflective approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. 8-13.

author argues that there is too much attention given to the knowledge-in-action approach among teacher educators in Sweden. They tend to claim that it is impossible to apply theory in school practice. Nevertheless, this is not what either of the two opposing approaches seeks to achieve, despite mutual criticism.³⁶

Another issue related to recent findings in teacher education research is the role of teachers' emotions. The issue was neglected for a long time and only in recent years it has received greater attention. It is mainly due to the needs of today's world. Culturally diverse attitudes to moral, social and individual issues bring emotions to the lives of students and teachers in classrooms.³⁷ But the issue of teachers' emotions is much broader. As mentioned above, teacher trainees' motivation to become teachers stems from the joy of teaching, working with young people and their pre-service teaching practice.

For teachers, the emotions they experience with their students are crucial for how they conduct their lessons and also how they evaluate themselves. When teachers experience emotions of anxiety, fear, loneliness, meaninglessness and hostility in relation to themselves, it translates into classrooms. Such emotions become even stronger when teachers' personal lives become detached from their profession. Teacher education programmes should deal with the issue and help teachers to be able to find emotional freedom in their future career and avoid teacher burnout.³⁸ Teacher trainees should be led to see the relevance and value of their emotions in relation to their profession. This could be done through reflective guidance during pre-service teaching practice.³⁹

³⁶ Hegender, Henrik. "The Assessment of Student Teachers' Academic and Professional Knowledge in School-Based Teacher Education." *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 54.2 (2010): 151-167.

³⁷ Denzin, Norman K. "Foreword: Performance, Pedagogy and Emotionality." *Advances in Teacher Emotion Research: The Impact on Teachers' Lives*. Eds. Paul A. Schutz and Michalinos Zembylas. New York: Springer, 2009. v.

³⁸ Malm 84-85.

³⁹ Kelchtermans, Geert, Katrijn Ballet, and Liesbeth Piot. "Surviving Diversity in Times of Performativity: Understanding Teachers' Emotional Experience of Change." *Advances in Teacher Emotion Research: The Impact on Teachers' Lives*. Eds. Paul A. Schutz and Michalinos Zembylas. New York: Springer, 2009. 230.

Czech perspective

As mentioned above, the main reason why the Lisbon Agenda failed to meet its objectives were national interests of the EU member states. It shows how national specifics are necessary to be considered when analyzing the relevance of international research in local contexts. Schools in the Czech Republic have gone through unprecedented changes since 1989, which were both institutional and educational. Besides the changes resulting from the change of political system, everyday life of people has been changing in line with the process of globalization.⁴⁰ Thus many issues related to teacher education are essentially the same as those dealt with internationally.

In teacher education research, teacher trainees' perspective and evaluation of how they are being prepared in teacher education programmes is becoming more important.⁴¹ According to the survey done in 2003, which questioned English language teacher trainees at faculties of education and philosophical faculties at Czech universities, teacher trainees generally expressed the need of having more seminars of didactics of English. Among the most frequently mentioned aspects of pre-service training which they missed in their studies were: 1) more teaching practice (starting in the 1st year of studies), 2) discussions about problematic issues in classes, 3) shift of attention from theoretical knowledge to its application in practice. The conclusions made in this respect stressed the importance of better didactical, pedagogical and psychological integration of linguistic subjects, better connection between theoretical preparation and teaching practice, and accentuation of the role of English didactics as a connecting element and coordinator of study programmes.⁴²

The question of the amount of teaching practice in teacher education programmes is even more prominent in the Czech environment than elsewhere. Spilková, one of the key figures in the field of teacher education in the Czech Republic,

⁴⁰ Kotásek, Jiří. "Proposals for setting up a teacher education programme to meet the requirements of the teachers' new professional roles and key competences in the knowledge-based society." *Teacher education in Europe: achievements, trends and prospects*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2006. 58-59.

⁴¹ Jelínek, Stanislav. "Didaktika cizích jazyků v přechodu studenta do role učitele." *Vzdělávání učitelů cizích jazyků na počátku 21. století*. Ed. Marie Fenclová. Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze - Pedagogická fakulta, 2004. 18-20.

⁴² Hanušová, Světlana. "Rozvíjení didaktické kompetence v rámci pregraduální přípravy učitelů anglického jazyka." *Vzdělávání učitelů cizích jazyků na počátku 21. století*. Ed. Marie Fenclová. Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze - Pedagogická fakulta, 2004. 103-105.

reminds that the issue of teaching practice is problematic and current trends are negative. After 1989, there were tendencies to increase the amount of teaching practice in teacher education programmes. However, in the second half of the nineties, the situation got worse as probably financial reasons caused a continuous reduction of teaching practice. Since 1996, the amount of teaching practice has been stabilized at four weeks at lower secondary and upper secondary schools, in the 4th and 5th year of studies respectively.

Nevertheless, some universities have made effort in search for better and more effective forms of teaching practice.⁴³ One of the attempts was put in place at the Faculty of Humanities in Pardubice in 2001.⁴⁴ Teaching practice is realized in the form of a clinical year. Teacher trainees continue with their full-time study and at the same time work as assistants of their mentors at schools, which they have a chance to choose for themselves. The role of the mentor is crucial as it provides a connection between theory and practice. Following the clinical year, trainees take part in a variety of reflective activities in university seminars, aimed at trainees' experience from the practice. The authors of the programme are aware of its limitations and risks. They point out that the programme requires adequate theoretical knowledge and a systematic reflection of trainees' experience to be effective.⁴⁵ The Faculty of Education at Charles University chose a similar approach when in 1992 set up a so-called 'clinical semester', in which teacher trainees spend at least 78 hours at an educational institution, most frequently at state schools. The main objective is to provide trainees with a realistic insight into the environment of teaching.⁴⁶

The development of reflective and self-reflective skills of trainees is seen as an essential part of teaching practice. There is a variety of forms how this development can be achieved: microteaching, simulations of model lessons, and analysis of reflective materials in seminars of didactics (e.g. reports, records of lesson content, and reflections

⁴³ Spilková 234-235.

⁴⁴ The faculty changed its name in 2005 to Department of Philosophy. See "Fakulta humanitních studií Univerzity Pardubice přejmenována na Fakultu filozofickou." *Pressweb* 1 December 2005. 9 March 2011 <<http://www.pressweb.cz/zprava/fakulta-humanitnich-studii-univerzity-pardubice-prejmenovana-fakultu-filozofickou>>.

⁴⁵ Pišová 237-239.

⁴⁶ Spilková 239.

on teaching practice).⁴⁷ The aim is to show trainees that teaching strategies and techniques cannot be just mechanically copied. Teachers develop their own teaching styles according to their personally driven motives. Trainees need to learn to be able to interpret their attitudes to teaching. Teacher educators would benefit from analysis of such interpretations and could adjust and create teacher education programmes, which would meet the real needs of trainees more effectively.⁴⁸ This approach is in line with the increased attention given to teacher trainees' emotions in the international context of teacher education.

The reflective approach to teacher education is a concept which did not originate in the context of Czech pedagogical environment. However, it has received a great deal of attention among Czech experts, especially since the second half of the nineties. Experimentation, research and theoretical background are still under the process of development. The importance to implement the approach into Czech environment appears to be out of question. Currently, the question is not whether but rather how to put it in practice effectively. As Švec points out, there is no clear conceptual framework and there are a number of varieties of this approach.⁴⁹ In this respect, unification of such irregularities based on further research in the Czech pedagogical context will have to be done so that the approach can become an integral part of Czech teacher education system.

Teacher education has gone through significant institutional and legislative changes in recent years. Degree programmes have changed their structure, becoming more flexible and open to meet a greater variety of teacher trainees' needs. Study organization gradually became more flexible at all faculties of education in the forms of credit and modular system. What remained relatively intact was the content of teacher-training programmes. Pedagogical and psychological preparation has undergone most dynamic changes, but current trends among faculties is rather to curb experimentation along with innovation and turn back to traditional approaches.⁵⁰ In the light of current

⁴⁷ Spilková 237.

⁴⁸ Perclová 228-230.

⁴⁹ Švec 71.

⁵⁰ Spilková 235.

trends in both international and Czech research and development in teacher education, this is a contradictory way of development.

2.2 English language teacher training approaches related to the research

The English language training approaches which I deal with in this section are those which were used in the seminars of English didactics and methodology at the Faculty of Education, Charles University. The teacher trainees in the seminars were subjects of the research. First, I give a brief theoretical overview of either of the approaches and then specify the forms in which they were applied in the seminars. The terminology I use to refer to the approaches is adopted from Michael J. Wallace, who is a proponent of one of them.⁵¹ There were two approaches administered in the seminars of didactics and methodology and one provided in the teaching practice which was a part of the study programme.

The applied science model

Historically, the approaches were developed one after another, each of them reacting to the weaknesses of the preceding one. The applied science model, which was the first one of the two, was developed in a reaction to the gap between theory and practice which emerged as problematic in teacher training in the USA in the 1960's and 1970's. To meet this goal, simulations of real lessons were used to practice teaching skills. The most common form of such simulations was microteaching. Laboratory schools were established at the university. Microteaching usually consisted of shorter than normal lessons in which a smaller number of students were taught. Limited numbers of teaching skills were practised. The lessons were also videotaped. Upon viewing the tape, teacher trainees were provided with feedback from their peers and a supervisor and if needed, ideas were given to adjust the lesson plan. The psychological principles which served as a background for the development of this approach were

⁵¹ Wallace 8-13.

those of behavioural psychology.⁵² The behaviour of people is seen as too complex to be trained and thus teachers are led to practising individual components of behaviours and skills. By frequent feedback, individual teaching skills become mastered. The role of a teacher in relation to students is essentially instructive and so is the role of a supervisor or mentor in relation to teacher trainees.⁵³

This approach was developed in a variety of forms, generally being referred to as ‘competency-based’ or ‘performance-based’ teacher education. As the skills to be mastered could be clearly defined and performed, it allowed for opportunities of testing and assessing trainees’ performances. However, lists of hundreds of competencies were created and became impossible to be put in practice.⁵⁴ Also, the criticism of the approach pointed out the fact that such practices in teacher training only lead trainees to focus on individual skills and ignore insight and reflection on teaching situations.⁵⁵ The proponents of the applied science model claim that the practices which the trainees are to adopt are based on scientific research, which is then refined by experimentation. As such, the approach is more accountable than other approaches which are not based on scientific research. The task of teacher trainees is to put the scientific findings into practice. If they fail to do that and face difficulties, it is not the scientific findings which are to be questioned, but the trainees themselves. The possibility that the scientific findings are in contradiction with real teaching situations is ignored.⁵⁶ Criticism of this approach led to the development of reflective approaches, which were focused on what the applied science model lacked – insight and reflection.⁵⁷

In the context of the research, the applied science model was administered according to the majority of its principles and conditions. The seminars of English didactics and methodology consisted mainly of microteaching and performance-based activities. The activities were taken from publications of three authors: Jeremy

⁵² Duchame 2441, 2447.

⁵³ Arends, Richard I. and Sharon Castle. “Instructional Strategies.” *Encyclopedia of Education: Second Edition*. Ed. James W. Guthrie. MacMillan Reference Library, 2002. 1181.

⁵⁴ Duchame 2441-2442.

⁵⁵ Duchame 2447.

⁵⁶ Wallace 8-10.

⁵⁷ Duchame 2447.

Harmer,⁵⁸ Scott Thornbury⁵⁹ and Tessa Woodward.⁶⁰ All these publications are practically oriented and consist of activities to be carried out in seminars of didactics. Besides activities, trainees are given instructions how to deal with individual teaching skills. The instructor's role was to give her own feedback after each trainee's performance and elicit feedback among the other trainees in the classroom. Their role was to act as 'real' students. When the instructor was about to introduce a new topic (e.g. phases of listening practice), she did so using teaching techniques which the trainees then practised themselves. The number of trainees in each seminar was approximately from 15 to 20. This made it extremely difficult organizationally, since each of the trainees got to practise teaching very little. For this reason, most trainees worked as teachers in pairs. Another disadvantage turned out to be unrealistic reactions of trainees to their colleagues performing teaching, which were to simulate reactions of real students. Traditionally, the applied science model uses video recording as a means of feedback. This was the only objective condition which was not met in the seminars.

The reflective model

As I have mentioned above, reflective approaches to teacher education were developed as a reaction to the limitations of the applied science model. Many publications were written in the 1980's and 1990's.⁶¹ Among them, Donald A. Shön's publications 'Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals think in action' and 'Educating the Reflective Practitioner' proved to be very influential for later development.⁶² In 1991, Michael J. Wallace published his work called 'Training Foreign Language Teachers: A Reflective Approach', which adopted the Shön's concept of a reflective practitioner and created a theoretical framework for its application in foreign language teacher education – the reflective model. In contrast to the applied science model, reflective approaches generally relate to developmental psychology.⁶³ Wallace's work served as a basis for the seminars of English didactics which were administered according to the reflective approach.

⁵⁸ Harmer, Jeremy. *How to Teach English*. Malaysia: Longman, 2001.

⁵⁹ Thornbury, Scott. *How to Teach Grammar*. Malaysia: Longman, 2002.

⁶⁰ Woodward, Tessa. *Ways of Training*. Singapore: Longman, 1992.

⁶¹ Duchame 2447.

⁶² Wallace 8.

⁶³ Duchame 2441-2442.

Wallace criticizes what is considered to be the major asset of the applied science model saying that empirically proved scientific findings were done by experts detached from practice, which disqualifies the validity of such findings. The separation of research and practice is more significant in teaching than in some other professions.⁶⁴ Instead of instructing trainees, the reflective model rather uses authentic teaching situations as a learning material, which requires reflective thinking of teacher trainees. The applied science model has the ambition to compensate for authentic teaching situations by the use of the microteaching method. In contrast, the reflective model presupposes a creation of the so-called 'reflective cycle', in which authentic teaching practice and reflection are continuously combined.⁶⁵ This helps to develop reflective and self-reflective skills which enable teachers to develop pedagogical insight. Such teachers are able to find reasons for problematic or unexpected situations which occur in class. As this kind of knowledge is acquired in practice, Wallace coined the term 'experiential knowledge', as opposed to 'received knowledge' provided by the applied science model. Experiential knowledge can be acquired only through teaching in authentic situations. Wallace reminds that also observations of authentic situations are beneficial for the development of reflective skills. However, this kind of knowledge is different.⁶⁶ What is important to stress is that the reflective model does not have the ambition to exchange 'received knowledge' for 'experiential knowledge'. It rather combines both kinds of knowledge.⁶⁷

Wallace is aware of the disadvantages of the reflective approach in general. Experience is essentially private and as such, difficult to be meaningfully transferred into reflective discussions within a group of trainees. Also, teaching situations are always very specific and the context is not fully transferrable either.⁶⁸ Application into practice was seen as one of the weaknesses of the reflective approach. The word 'reflection' was also criticised for being just an empty slogan, as there is no real difference between 'experiential' and 'received' knowledge. The knowledge described as 'experiential' was seen as knowledge which has not been learned. Thus it would be

⁶⁴ Wallace 10-11.

⁶⁵ Wallace 49.

⁶⁶ Wallace 14-15.

⁶⁷ Wallace 52.

⁶⁸ Wallace 53.

more appropriate to make further research and analyze the process of teaching in the light of theory.⁶⁹ However, that would not solve the problem of how to transfer such findings into teacher education programmes.

In the context of the research, the reflective model was not applied in fully sufficient conditions. The model presupposes continuous teaching practice as a key information source for the reflective process. Such a condition was not fully met, since teaching practice was organized in a much shorter form. However, trainees were provided with videos for observation tasks, which is also a kind of experiential knowledge, as mentioned above.⁷⁰ Although it was not possible to make a full use of authentic teaching experience, the activities done in seminars were designed to help develop trainees' reflective thinking.

The craft model

Historically, this is the oldest of the three which were used in the context of the research. Traditionally, this approach is also called the 'master-apprentice' model. It is based on experiential knowledge, but the interpretation of experience is provided by the mentor (master). The trainee's (apprentice's) task is essentially to imitate mentor's teaching practices. As such, it does not help the trainee to become a fully independent teacher, but only a more or less successful imitator. However, basic techniques and skills, such as the use of blackboard or setting up a group work, can be efficiently demonstrated and thus beneficial for the trainee.⁷¹ Although shortly, the trainees, who are subjects of the research, were involved in this teacher training approach. It was during the teaching practice, which was a part of their degree programme. The trainees taught at upper-secondary language schools in the classes of their mentor, who provided trainees with feedback and professional advice.

⁶⁹ Gilroy, Peter. "Reflection on Schön: an epistemological critique and a practical alternative." *Journal of Education for Teaching* 19.4/5 (1993): 139-140.

⁷⁰ Wajnryb, Ruth. *Classroom Observation Tasks: A resource book for language teachers and trainers*. Glasgow: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

⁷¹ Wallace 15-16.

Chapter 3

Aims, methodology and resource materials

Aims of the research

The aim of the research is to examine which aspects of the seminars of English didactics and methodology of a master's degree programme helped to develop teacher competence of teacher trainees. The trainees were involved in three different teacher training approaches and the question is how each of them helped to develop which teaching skills. The great demand for qualified English teachers on the market provided a great opportunity to examine the influence of continuous teaching experience on the development of professional competence, as almost half of the trainees had had the opportunity to carry out teaching practice privately along with their studies.

The research questions are as follows:

- How influential is the amount of teaching experience on the development of teacher competence?
- Which teacher training approaches help to develop which areas of teacher competence?

Methodology of the research

Although it was once considered contradictory to combine quantitative and qualitative methods of research, nowadays the two basic concepts are considered to be complementary and as such, able to deliver more coherent results.⁷² The primary data to be analyzed were trainees' reflections written in the form of an essay. Regarding

⁷² Maňák, Josef, Štefan Švec and Vlastimil Švec, eds. *Slovník pedagogické metodologie*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2005. 57.

quantitative methods, I categorized the topics included in the reflections together with information about trainees' amount of teaching experience to create basic descriptive statistical data, which served as a background for further quantitative analysis.⁷³ The quantitative analysis was based on the hermeneutic interpretation of the reflections and correlated with the statistical and theoretical background.⁷⁴ Having been involved in the same teacher education processes under more or less the same conditions as were the subjects of the research (trainees), I was able to understand specific contexts trainees referred to, which positively contributed to the validity of the quantitative analysis.

Subjects of the research: teacher trainees

First of all, it is necessary to give a brief description of the group of teacher trainees whose reflections on their teaching practice were used. The group consisted of 43 trainees in their last year of studies at the Faculty of Education, Charles University in Prague. The trainees were studying a master's degree programme of general subjects (two subjects as a rule, one of them being English) for lower and upper secondary schools. The teaching practice which served as the basis for their reflections was the second placement and last one in the course of their university studies.

The first placement took place in the summer semester of the preceding academic year. It shared almost the same conditions and requirements as did the second placement. Further details on the conditions and requirements are given in the following paragraph. However, there were two major differences. The first placement took place at lower secondary schools, whereas the second placement took place at upper secondary schools. Also, the reflections on the first placement were given for each lesson taught, while there was only one comprehensive reflection on the second placement.

Teaching practice and resource materials

The second placement of the teaching practice took place at secondary schools (most of them being grammar schools) in and also outside Prague in the span of four

⁷³ Švaříček, Roman, Klára Šed'ová et al. *Kvalitativní výzkum v pedagogických vědách*. Praha: Portál, 2007. 16, 25-27.

⁷⁴ Maňák 41.

weeks, two weeks for English teaching practice.⁷⁵ The time period reserved for the whole teaching practice was between September 22, 2008 and October 24, 2008. The teaching practice is administered by the Teaching Practice Centre of the Faculty of Education. Its competence is to assign time period given for the practice and finance mentors. The Department of English Language and Literature organizes all the other details of the practice. The trainees were required to observe at least five and teach twelve teaching lessons for each subject of their degree programme. Also, they were supposed to observe the classes they were about to teach before their first teaching lesson, then to spend the same amount of time at school as their mentor and take part in all activities related to teacher competences.

During the practice, the trainees were continuously observed by their mentor,⁷⁶ another teacher trainee, and a university teacher from the Department of English Language and Literature.⁷⁷ All the observations were analyzed and discussed right after each lesson. As the output data of the teaching practice, the trainees turned in a daily record of the classes taught and observed which was verified by the management of the school, assessment written by the mentor, observation checklist filled in by the teacher from the Department of English Language and Literature, and a reflection in the form of an essay of two pages size A4 written by the trainees themselves.

Of the 43 teacher trainees, not all carried out their practice at grammar schools. Many of them had had experience from other than university-provided teaching practice (e.g. primary and secondary schools, language schools, summer-school camps, charity education projects abroad). These trainees' teaching practice was recognized to be valid under several conditions: 1) a confirmation by the management of the school of the total time length of the teaching practice (either part-time or full-time teaching load), 2) number of students taught in each class (at least 10) and their age (young adults), and 3) a reflection on the practice in the form of an essay of two pages size A4 written by the trainees themselves.

⁷⁵ The trainees were given the possibility to arrange their teaching practice at a school of their own choice (e.g. their former secondary school) upon a consultation with the teaching practice supervisor.

⁷⁶ Typically, it was the teacher of the classes the trainees were assigned to teach in.

⁷⁷ The teacher observed at least one of the twelve teaching lessons of the whole teaching practice.

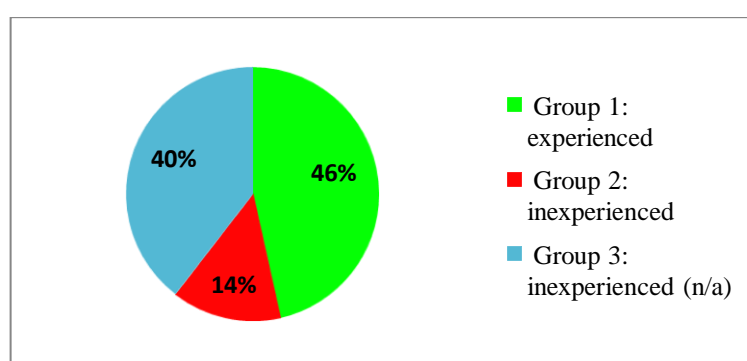
The primary sources were teacher trainees’ reflections on their teaching practice. The secondary source was professional literature discussed in detail in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.

Amount of experience

Furthermore, all teacher trainees were required to include information whether they had had other than university-provided teaching experience, regardless the form of the teaching practice. I used this information, which was included in the trainees’ reflections, as the basis for further analysis of how the amount of teaching experience during the training process affects the development of professional competence. In other words, how the difference between “received” and “experiential” knowledge⁷⁸ affects the development of particular skills. I have decided to categorize the trainees’ teaching experience into three groups:⁷⁹

- 1) “experienced” - trainees with other than university-provided teaching practice,
- 2) “inexperienced” - trainees without other than university-provided teaching practice,
- 3) “inexperienced (n/a)” - trainees who did not mention other than university-provided teaching practice.

Figure 3.1 Trainees’ other than university-provided teaching experience



As I have mentioned, the trainees were required to include information about their other than university-provided teaching experience. Therefore, the trainees in

⁷⁸ Wallace 14-15.

⁷⁹ See Figure 3.1.

group 3 are basically those without such experience, but who didn't feel the need to reflect on that fact as opposed to the trainees in group 2. The distinction between group 2 and 3 is purposeful as it seems to show trainees' attitude towards professional experience, particularly the need to reflect on the amount of previous experience. It is necessary to point out that the trainees who are described as inexperienced had had a certain amount of teaching experience based on the first placement of their teaching practice.

Topics raised in reflections and related teaching skills

The only type of output data from the teaching practice common for all the teacher trainees were reflections of 2-3 pages of A4 paper size. No guidelines were given on what information the reflections should include, except the requirement to include information about other than university-provided teaching experience. It was solely trainees' choice what to reflect on. I took this as an asset for the analyzing process. Wallace points out that especially in teacher's profession there is a separation of research and practice.⁸⁰ Unlike the observation checklists, not only did the reflections provide answers to particular issues, but also came up with the issues. The aspects of the teaching process to be reflected on were not given beforehand, but were raised by the trainees themselves based purely on their own real experience. Thus, the validity of the choice of topics for reflection appears to be more authentic. Also, the choice of topics done by the trainees is very likely to be influenced by the teacher education approaches they were involved in during the course of their studies.

Nevertheless, some information included in the reflections had very little in common with the professional competence of a teacher. Mostly, such information was of a descriptive character, providing information about particular contents of the classes' year plans, organisation of the school and other specifications. Information directly related to the teaching process prevailed by a great deal and I have categorized

⁸⁰ "This tendency for the experts to be well removed from the day-to-day working scene is more pronounced in teaching than in some other professions... Researches and practitioners are usually different people." Wallace 10. "Whenever I have asked experienced teachers from a wide variety of countries to do this exercise [to write a list of strengths and weaknesses of a teacher education programme, in which they were involved], complaints have most commonly focussed on the perceived gap between theory and practice." Wallace 4.

all the issues commented on by the trainees into 14 topics. In the following table, the topics are arranged according to the number of occurrence in all reflections:

Table 3.1 Topics raised in the trainees' reflections according to the number of occurrence

1	Class atmosphere	73%
2	General comments on teaching practice	73%
3	Class management	71%
4	Students' discipline / teacher's authority	66%
5	Lesson planning	57%
6	Time management	43%
7	Mentor	43%
8	Student motivation	41%
9	Age of students	30%
10	Teacher motivation	27%
11	Use of Czech	23%
12	Giving instructions (Teacher's level of English)	21%
13	Use of audiovisual aids	11%
14	Teacher's level of English (expertise)	9%

Of all the 14 topics raised by the trainees, 12 relate to individual aspects of professional competence of a teacher.⁸¹ It is not possible to categorize these aspects according to the concept of teacher competences in the way they are used in the Czech professional environment, for two reasons. First, there is no general agreement among Czech academics on how to classify teacher competences. Second, the aspects of teacher competence as selected by the trainees do not match either of the classifications.⁸² As a result, I have decided to use a different term, which I feel is appropriate to be used for individual aspects of professional competence – skill.⁸³ In this case, we mean skills related to the development of teacher's competence. Some of the

⁸¹ See Table 3.1, white and yellow fields.

⁸² Professional teacher competences are defined differently by major Czech academics such as Průcha, Vašutová, or Švec. See Gošová, Věra. "Kompetence učitele." *Metodický portál RVP* 3 February 2011. 23 March 2011 <http://wiki.rvp.cz/Knihovna/1.Pedagogicky_lexikon/K/Kompetence_učitele>.

⁸³ "...the term skill usually means actual competence that has been acquired by training, schooling, or practice. The concept is used in several disciplines (most importantly economics, sociology, psychology, education, and ergonomics)..." See Vesely, Arnost. "Skill." *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. 2nd ed. 9 vols. Ed. William A. Darity Jr. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2008. 523.

topics raised by the trainees are not essentially skills but can be used rather as a cover term for a skill or a cluster of skills needed for mastering each given topic. For simplicity's sake, only the term "skill" is used for topics whose name either stands directly for a skill or for a related cluster of skills. Besides the topics referred to as "skills", there are two remaining which relate to the trainees' teaching practice in general and in relation to the mentor.⁸⁴

In recent years, the question of changing requirements of professional competence on the job market gave rise to the concept of soft skills (typically used in correlation with hard skills). The concept of soft skills relates to skills which are hardly to be developed in professional training but rather in practice. Such skills are determined by the personality of an individual.⁸⁵ Soft skills, such as effective communication, creativity, flexibility, change readiness, leadership, or team building,⁸⁶ are an inseparable part of teacher's everyday activity.⁸⁷ In contrast to soft skills, hard skills represent motor and cognitive skills which can be defined, trained and evaluated within the training process.⁸⁸ These are usually the core skills of professional competence. Among the skills commented on by the trainees, I have selected five which I consider as having the characteristics typical of soft skills.⁸⁹ The seven remaining skills are hard skills.⁹⁰ Since the skills are mutually linked within each of the two concepts, both soft skills and hard skills will be discussed in separate chapters.

Successfulness of teaching strategies

For further analysis of each of the topics, I classified the trainees' comments with a scheme which provides a simple assessment of how successfully each of the trainees managed to deal with the given topic – positive, negative, mixed and not

⁸⁴ See Table 3.1, grey fields.

⁸⁵ See a broad definition of the concept of soft skills on the website of the Lifelong Learning Institute of the Brno University of Technology. "Slovníček pojmů 'soft-skills'." *Institut celoživotního vzdělávání VUT v Brně*. 24 March 2011 <<http://www.lli.vutbr.cz/slovnicek-pojmu-soft-skills>>.

⁸⁶ Vesely 523.

⁸⁷ Teachers and professionals appear to reflect on the relatively new concept of soft skills in relation to teaching. See, for example, Mulai, Pravin Vasant. "Importance of Soft skills for English teachers." *Teaching English* 15 September 2010, 24 March 2011 <<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/pravin-mulai/importance-soft-skills-english-teachers>>.

⁸⁸ Vesely 523.

⁸⁹ See Table 3.1, yellow fields.

⁹⁰ See Table 3.1, white fields.

available.⁹¹ Positive comments include not only purely positive experience, but also problematic situations with a positive outcome. Negative comments describe problematic situations which the trainees failed to solve. Mixed comments are either of a very general character to be classified as negative or positive, or they describe more than one issue with both positive and negative comments. Finally, each topic left without a comment shows either little interest by a trainee or simply no need to reflect on it. For each topic, this classification is put into relation with the groups of experienced and inexperienced. Consequently, it gives us basic data about how much each skill or topic is influenced by the amount of experience.

Correlation with teacher education approaches

Following the basic classification, I use actual comments of the trainees to illustrate which strategies and approaches the trainees used when reaching either positive or negative outcome. Trainees' comments are then analyzed in relation to a teacher education approach (they had met with during their studies) according to which characteristics typical for which approach the comments bear. The aim is to discover which teacher education approaches helped to develop which teaching skills. The trainees received training based on two teacher education approaches: the applied science model and the reflective model. Besides, majority of the trainees had the opportunity to learn from their mentor during their teaching practice⁹² – which represents the craft model.⁹³

In summary, in the three sections of the following chapter,⁹⁴ there are three stages of analysis applied to each of the topics reflected on by the teacher trainees:

- 1) teaching skills analyzed in relation to teaching experience (quantitative method),
- 2) analysis of successful and unsuccessful teaching strategies (qualitative method),

⁹¹ In charts, each class has its colour: positive – green, negative – red, mixed – orange, not available (N/A) – blue.

⁹² Of all the trainees, those carrying out teaching practice organized by the university worked with a mentor. Majority of the trainees who organized their own teaching practice didn't have the chance to work with a mentor.

⁹³ The approaches and models and the forms in which they were administered are discussed in Section 2.2.

⁹⁴ 4.1 Hard skills, 4.2 Soft skills, 4.3 General comments on teaching practice

3) teacher education approaches correlated with trainees' comments (qualitative method).

In addition, a comprehensive summary of the findings of the analysing process and conclusions are provided for each chapter and topic.

Chapter 4

Data analysis

4.1 Hard skills

In the general context of professional competence, the concept of hard skills comprises of such skills for which it is possible to use clear and measurable ways of training.⁹⁵ Traditionally, these skills were scientifically elaborated in the ‘applied science model’ of professional training. This model uses empirical findings to create comprehensible scientific knowledge schemes which are then transmitted to teacher trainees. The task of trainees is to implement the knowledge into their teaching practice. In this case we talk about received knowledge as discussed in Section 2.2 in more detail. Thus one of the objectives in this chapter is to observe whether received knowledge was seen as helpful and sufficient by the trainees when putting it into practice.

Of all the twelve skill-related topics reflected on by the trainees,⁹⁶ seven required the use of hard skills. I have arranged them according to how frequently they appeared in the trainees’ reflections.⁹⁷ The most frequently commented topics referred to class management, time management and lesson planning. These topics had been core elements of the university seminars attended by approximately half of the trainees. The seminars had been administered in the style of the ‘applied science model.’ The model presupposes that practice comes after theoretical training and thus is one-way in this sense.⁹⁸ Therefore we might expect little difference in the evaluation of hard skills between experienced and inexperienced trainees.

⁹⁵ Coates, Dennis E. “People Skills Training: Are You Getting a Return on Your Investment?” *Praxis Consulting, Inc.* 2006, 28 March 2011 <<http://www.praxisconsulting.org/PeopleSkills.pdf>>.

⁹⁶ See Table 3.1, Chapter 3 Aims, methodology and resource materials.

⁹⁷ See Table 4.1, Section 4.1 Hard skills.

⁹⁸ Wallace 9.

Table 4.1 Topics related to hard skills raised in the trainees' reflections according to the number of occurrence – all trainees

1	Class management	71%
2	Lesson planning	57%
3	Time management	43%
4	Use of L1 (Czech), L2 (English)	23%
5	Giving instructions	21%
6	Use of audiovisual aids	11%
7	Teacher's level of English	9%

However, there was definitely a great deal of difference between the experienced and inexperienced trainees in the choice of topics. The experienced trainees commented on hard skills much less frequently than the inexperienced trainees.⁹⁹ Among the most frequently commented topics, only the topic of class management shared similar level of importance between the two groups, whereas time management and lesson planning seemed to lose their importance with a greater amount of experience. Similarly, teacher's level of English ceased to be an issue with experience.

What is surprising is the lack of comments on the use of audiovisual aids. With greater experience, the topic became even less important. Today's schools are equipped with up-to-date audiovisual technologies¹⁰⁰ which the trainees had never had a chance to work with when being students themselves. At the same time, the university classrooms do not offer such equipment which makes it impossible for trainees not only to get skilled in using them but even to get a comprehensive idea of all the possibilities the new technologies offer. This might be a more probable reason for the lack of interest in the topic rather than the explanation that the trainees had mastered related skills and thus feel no need of any further commentary.

It is important to point out that there were hardly any comments to be found concerning a major aspect of class management – assessment. The reason for this is

⁹⁹ Compare Tables 4.2 and 4.3

¹⁰⁰ Besides the traditional blackboard (or whiteboard), copier, and audio and video equipment, there are overhead projectors, laptops with connection to the internet, and touch-based or pen-based interactive whiteboards available in most Czech schools.

apparent. The trainees carried out their practice in the span of just two weeks, which made it virtually impossible to practice assessment skills as they presuppose continuous work with a given group of students over a greater period of time. Still, there were some trainees who did not omit to mention their effort to revise vocabulary from a preceding lesson but did not give any specifications on whether and in which way they gave assessment to students.

All in all, it is clear that the amount of experience did have a significant effect on the development of hard skills. Many issues which occurred in the teaching practice appeared to be less important for those with greater teaching experience. The only topic which retained its importance also with the experienced trainees was the organisational aspect of class management. This could have been due to an overall complexity of skills needed to successfully deal with this area of teaching competence. As this was the most frequently commented topic of all, it will be given greater attention in the following analysis of individual topics. The topics will be discussed in the order as given by the number of occurrence among all trainees.

Table 4.2 Topics related to hard skills raised in the trainees' reflections according to the number of occurrence – experienced trainees

1	Class management	65%
2	Lesson planning	30%
3	Time management	25%
4	Use of L1 (Czech), L2 (English)	25%
5	Use of audiovisual aids	5%
6	Giving instructions	5%
7	Teacher's level of English	0%

Table 4.3 Topics related to hard skills raised in the trainees' reflections according to the number of occurrence – inexperienced and inexperienced (n/a) trainees

Inexperienced:

1	Lesson planning	100%
2	Time management	67%
3	Class management	67%
4	Giving instructions	50%
5	Use of audiovisual aids	17%
6	Teacher's level of English	17%
7	Use of L1 (Czech), L2 (English)	0%

Inexperienced (n/a):

1	Class management	82%
2	Lesson planning	76%
3	Time management	59%
4	Giving instructions	29%
5	Use of L1 (Czech), L2 (English)	29%
6	Use of audiovisual aids	18%
7	Teacher's level of English	18%

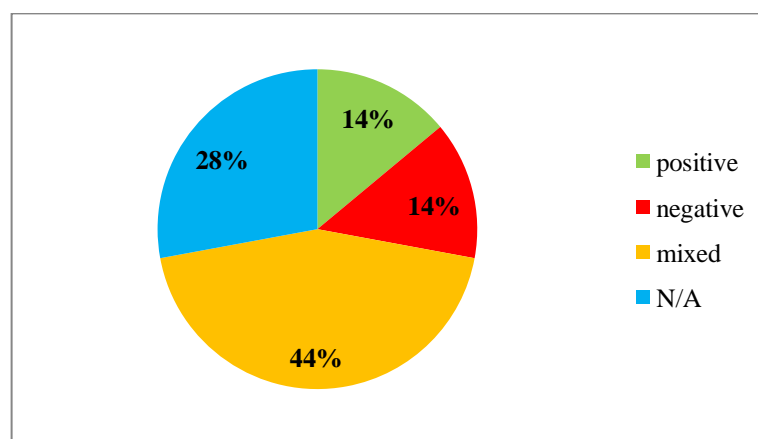
4.1.1 Class management

The great complexity and variety of skills required for successful class management gives a reason why the topic was the most frequent one among both experienced and inexperienced trainees. The trainees commented on many aspects of class management, for example, lesson planning, time management, seating arrangement, ways of explaining grammar, eliciting, monitoring, error correction, pace of a lesson, group work, pair work, communicative activities versus drill exercises, differences among students, teacher talking time versus student talking time, inappropriate level of a textbook, improvisation, variety of techniques, and balanced attention to all students. Lesson planning and time management proved to be two major topics, especially for the inexperienced group of trainees, and for that reason both are discussed independently in respective sections. Some of the trainees saw a very close

relation between the successfulness of class management and the discipline and motivation of students. Thus it shows that when dealing with class management, it is also important to consider correlation between hard skills and soft skills.

Regarding the evaluation of trainees of how successfully they managed to deal with class management, their comments were mostly mixed. Neither positive nor negative comments prevailed as they accounted for only 28 per cent of all, 14 per cent each, whereas mixed comments were the most frequent ones, as shown in Figure 4.1. Mixed comments did not usually refer to only one skill but rather to a variety of skills, as mentioned above, some of them being positive and some negative. It was not therefore possible to classify them as either positive or negative. This only underlines the complexity of skills needed for successful class management.

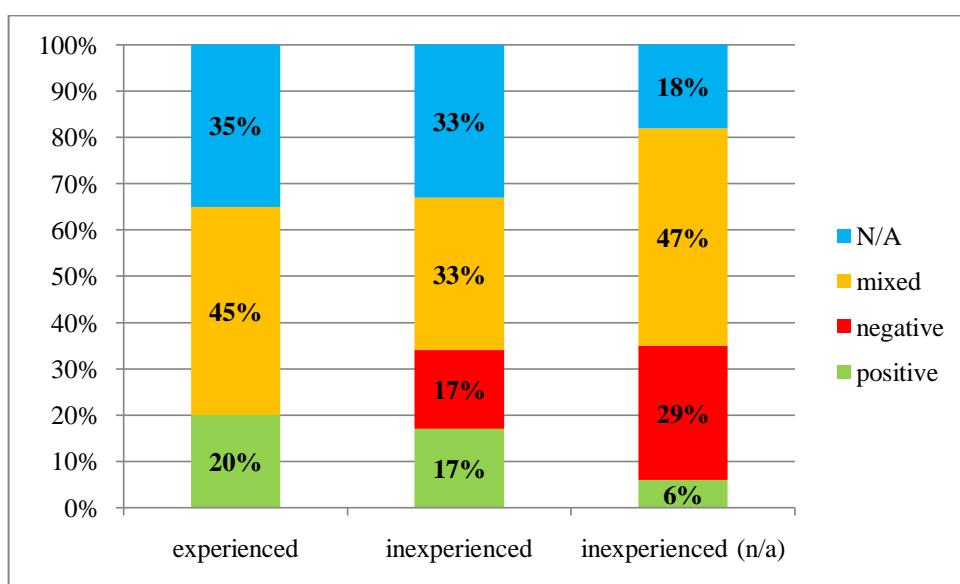
Figure 4.1 Average evaluation of hard skills related to class management



The assumption concerning hard skills mentioned in Section 4.1, due to which we might have expected no significant difference between the evaluation of the experienced and inexperienced groups of trainees, proved not to be fully correct. As Figure 4.2 shows, none of the experienced trainees gave negative comment on class management. On the contrary, almost one third of the inexperienced trainees faced difficulties for which they did not manage to find a solution. Among them, the trainees who reflected on their teaching inexperience had an overall better evaluation than the trainees who did not reflect on their inexperience. Also, of the latter group, there was only one trainee who gave an overall positive comment on class management. The number of positive comments was higher with the experienced trainees and the

inexperienced ones who were open to reflect on experience. In summary, we might conclude that the amount of teaching experience and ability to reflect on experience helped the trainees to achieve better results when dealing with class management in their teaching practice.

Figure 4.2 Average evaluation of hard skills related to class management in correlation with teaching experience



Trainees' comments: seating arrangement, group work and pair work

As far as the actual comments of the trainees are concerned, a considerable amount of attention was given to the question of seating arrangement and placing students into groups. Difficulties were encountered especially by the inexperienced trainees. One of the common reasons why the trainees wanted to change the seating arrangement of students was to make students speak more English instead of Czech when working in groups. "It's important to change seating arrangement occasionally. With the same seating arrangement, students create pairs and get used to speaking just to one another. When the seating arrangement changes, they have a problem and they don't cooperate with the new one in a pair and rather work individually. However, it made them speak English more (not Czech as with their usual one in pair)."¹⁰¹ Another trainee of the experienced ones also gave a rather positive comment and concluded why

¹⁰¹ Markéta Š. (Group 1: experienced)

her strategy was successful, despite facing adversity: “At first, the students were complaining about it... Finally, they got used to it...”¹⁰²

Inexperienced trainees reacted to difficulties in a more resigned manner. “In the first lesson, there were more than 20 students... Of course, I divided them into pairs and groups for individual discussions, but still it was difficult to control them... speaking activities at such an amount are not convenient.”¹⁰³ Or as regards to placing students into groups: “One group worked faster than the other and I did not know what to do with the faster students.”¹⁰⁴ These and other comments show that the reactions of students were generally not positive to adjustments in the seating arrangement. What made the strategies of the experienced trainees more successful was the employment of their own personal qualities, such as patience and persistence. It is also important to point out that effective work with organisational forms presupposes that a teacher knows his or her students. This condition was not met in the case of the trainees’ teaching practice, one of the main reasons being short time length of the practice.

Balanced attention to all students

The issue of giving attention to all students equally was dealt with more successfully, regardless the amount of teaching experience. Inexperienced trainees admitted that it is not generally easy to distribute attention among students equally, especially when some students are liked by a teacher more than some others. “I must also say that I liked two classes more than the other ones. Teachers probably have their favourite students... but it is important to remain even-handed and not let yourself influence by some personal antipathy, which is not always easy.”¹⁰⁵ The trainees who realized this made effort to adjust their teaching accordingly. “With the help of my supervisor [mentor] I realized some of the weaker points of my teaching style... One of the most frequent one is giving too much attention to the individual... I want to show everybody that I’m interested... the result is that the rest of the class take a rest and are too relaxed and we waste time. Now I know the teacher has to keep all the pupils

¹⁰² Šárka V. (Group 1: experienced)

¹⁰³ Petra K. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁰⁴ Š. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁰⁵ Alžběta Z. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

occupied during all the lesson.”¹⁰⁶ Personal preferences of a trainee in relation to students as well as a good will to help others might have been challenged in this area, but the trainees coped with the issue generally quite well. The feedback given by a mentor proved to be helpful.

Error correction

When addressing the issue of error correction, some inexperienced trainees expressed doubts whether and when to correct students. “I did not know when to correct the students and when to ignore their mistakes... when somebody was speaking very quickly I was concentrating more on the content than the form.”¹⁰⁷ Among the experienced trainees, one gave a different reason for such doubts than comprehension of the content of what the student is saying: “I also find it difficult to correct students in case they make mistakes... because I don’t want to discourage them when they speak fluently. Of course, I sometimes correct it later or I repeat it correctly, however I am not sure if the students really remember the mistake and its correction.”¹⁰⁸ Another experienced trainee pointed out the effect of error correction on the motivation and cooperation of students: “My main goal is to make my students speak English without fear and stress. I try to praise those students who answer correctly, whose answers are original or simply those who cooperate with me. When I correct my students, I try to do it smiling since I don’t want them to feel uncomfortable. I want them all to participate in my lesson.”¹⁰⁹ Among the other comments referring to error correction, the trainees did not omit to mention the importance of addressing other students first to correct a mistake. All in all, error correction proved to be an area which requires variety of approaches according to what the students need to practise (accuracy, fluency, attitude to making mistakes, ability to learn from mistakes, etc.). As such, it needs to be practised in a number of authentic situations with real students.

¹⁰⁶ Bohdana, P. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁰⁷ Markéta K. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁰⁸ Šárka K. (Group 1: experienced)

¹⁰⁹ Anna B. (Group 1: experienced)

Variety in the students' level of English and the level of textbooks

Another issue which shared similar attention from both experienced and inexperienced trainees were the differences of the level of English among students as well as between students and assigned textbooks. "One of the problems I must face is that I have to adjust the level of all my students so that they were not bored or on the other side they could follow the lesson without bigger difficulties... They came to the grammar school from different primary schools with different level of English... I see a disadvantage in this... However it is a challenge for me!"¹¹⁰ Another example illustrates the positive attitude which was more common with the experienced trainees: "The differences among students make the job of a teacher more interesting, on the other hand, it is sometimes quite difficult... I always try to keep everyone busy."¹¹¹ Let us see one more comment (all three given by experienced trainees), which is more specific in the description of the strategies which emerged to be successful. "To solve this problem, I try to involve the more advanced [students] in the lesson: for example if there is an unknown word in a text, I try to ask the others before I give the translation; I also use the same strategy during grammar explanation. When we do some written activities, I have some extra exercises prepared for the faster ones."¹¹² Like with many of the other issues related to class management, experienced trainees treated difficulties they encountered rather as a challenge, which seemed to help them find ways to tackle the issue.

The problem with an inappropriate level of textbooks received similar reactions from the students like the problem of different levels of English among students themselves. Unsatisfied students became inattentive and bored, as one of the inexperienced trainees pointed out: "It is worth noting that the level of difficulty of the latter [textbook] proved a poor match even for the average students, which made the majority of the class rather bored and restless."¹¹³ As opposed to many of the experienced trainees, he just stated the fact and had no commentary on how or whether he tried to deal with the problem. An experienced trainee handled the problem with a

¹¹⁰ Anna B. (Group 1: experienced)

¹¹¹ Šárka K. (Group 1: experienced)

¹¹² Pavla K. (Group 1: experienced)

¹¹³ Martin L. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

textbook in a self-reliant manner: “The language skills and the components of the language system are not balanced [in the textbook]... I try to think up these tasks and give them to my students.”¹¹⁴ Sometimes, there were objective reasons why trainees were limited in their effort to look for a solution. “The students already knew the things I was teaching them and they had to be bored. I asked the teacher after the lesson why they didn’t get more advanced textbook and she told me that the school wants to have the same book for all the groups and that it’s not allowed to use a different one.”¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, the experienced trainees dealing with a very similar issue and reactions of students – as it was discussed in a previous paragraph – faced the problem with a positive approach, took it as a challenge and eventually came up with strategies which helped to solve the issue indirectly, offering the unsatisfied and bored students attractive possibilities to compensate for the things they were missing in either the content of the lesson or textbook.

Variety of techniques¹¹⁶

Variety of techniques and activities received positive comments among the experienced trainees. They saw it as a tool to meet the variety of learning styles among students. “I always integrate various activities and approaches, so that the vast majority of my students are satisfied.”¹¹⁷ There was another reason mentioned: as the students get older and more knowledgeable, lessons with them require a higher standard of the teacher’s work with techniques. “Also, it is a big difference from teaching on elementary school in the fact that the methods have to be selected more carefully. I remember from my teaching practice on elementary school that students often appreciate any method as far as it is different from what they normally do.”¹¹⁸ Variety was seen as positive also by some inexperienced trainees. “I feel quite well about the demonstrative strategies I used – different ways of explaining unknown vocabulary,

¹¹⁴ Radka B. (Group 1: experienced)

¹¹⁵ Hana B. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹¹⁶ The term ‘technique’ is used instead of ‘method’, because the term ‘method’ rather stands for a coherent set of ‘techniques’. The distinction is in accordance with that of Larsen-Freeman, which the trainees had been acquainted with in the university seminars of English didactics and methodology. See Larsen-Freeman, Diane. *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. 1.

¹¹⁷ Šárka V. (Group 1: experienced)

¹¹⁸ Šárka K. (Group 1: experienced)

drawing, gestures, giving examples and comparing them.”¹¹⁹ However, it proved not to be a recipe for everything as stated by one of the inexperienced trainees: “I tried to use as many games and activities as possible, but once I turned to one group to explain something, the other group started misbehaving.”¹²⁰ The ability to make a lesson as variable as possible didn’t automatically lead to positive results, unless it was met with the ability to analyze students’ needs and expectations. In accordance with what we could see with many other teaching aspects of class management, for successful development of this teaching area, it is necessary for trainees to work with real students in real teaching situations.

Student assessment

One crucial aspect of class management is the assessment of students. It is a teaching area which has a tremendous influence on the development of students. It is the main tool for giving feedback to students about their work, knowledge, skills, effort and also prospects for their future career. Unfortunately, the teaching practice provided by university was too short for the trainees, for example, to have a chance to create, give and mark tests, to see which approaches to student assessment work to meet the real needs of students, to see how it affects the personal development of students, and to discover all the mutual relations student assessment shares with all the other teaching areas. On the other hand, among the experienced trainees, there were a few who had the chance to work with student assessment over a longer period of time and gave thorough commentary on the issue in their reflections.

The real experience with students proved the overall importance of student assessment. “We often write small tests but I am sure it is a better way than to write just four tests per year. They get used to the small tests and like having many marks.”¹²¹ Despite not having the opportunity to give and mark test and see the effects of student assessment in the long term, there was one inexperienced student who noticed the influence a frequent feedback might have on motivation of students: “I should evaluate the work of the students as often as possible. Especially young learners need frequent

¹¹⁹ Anna W. (Group 2: inexperienced)

¹²⁰ Hana B. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹²¹ Anna B. (Group 1: experienced)

feedback. Otherwise, they are not motivated.”¹²² The importance of student assessment was not related only to the motivation of students but also to their overall progress: “Elementary students write regular tests after every lesson... The more advanced learners have only one minor test in the middle of the term... Consequently, while real beginners get better almost every single lesson, the more advanced students in each group aren’t probably motivated enough to work appropriately. As a result, the less advanced the students were, the more work they have done and the more progress they have made.” It seems apparent that a longer period of time (at least one term in a school year) assigned to teaching practice is an essential condition for the development of teaching skills related to student assessment.

The role of soft skills in class management

As I have suggested at the beginning of this section, there is a significant overlap between hard and soft skills. Interestingly, it was mainly the inexperienced trainees who gave comments on motivation of students in more or less direct relation to class management. In the situations the trainees mentioned, students’ motivation and consequently class management were negatively influenced by, for example, changes in seating arrangement, inappropriate level of a textbook, differences among students, shyness of students, bad relations among students, etc. As one inexperienced trainee noted, it was very hard to conduct a lesson, once there was no emotional feedback given by the students: “The classes with the well-behaved and well-prepared students were quite unpleasant for me. The students were just sitting during the lesson, saying nothing, looking to be bored or at least uninterested in what’s going on. They seem to endure the lesson with no trace of smile or any other emotion. This was suffering for me. I did not recognize whether they know this well and therefore they are bored or whether they do not understand me a word and I should repeat it again.”¹²³ Regarding positive comments, frequent feedback given to students was seen as having positive effect on motivation of students.

¹²² Zdeňka E. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹²³ Jitka P. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

Also, the behaviour of a teacher trainee on a personal level had an important effect on motivation and cooperation of students. This brings us to the soft skills which are connected with the teacher's ability to see oneself with a perspective and a healthy amount of self-confidence. The following comment illustrates the effect of such teacher's personal skills on cooperation with students. "The worst lesson was my first lesson in 3A, where I made a lot of mistakes. I lost my confidence and I think the students noticed that... It happened to me that I was not sure about correctness of my answer several times. The teacher who observed my lessons though assured me that it is quite natural and it happens to everyone."¹²⁴ In this case, the role of a mentor was perfectly fulfilled as it gave the trainee a valuable feedback based on real teaching experience. The relativity of the importance of mistakes made by teachers and being honest with students at the same time was commented on also by another inexperienced trainee: "Another slogan that I will try to stick with is 'never apologize for the mistakes that you made several days ago, that are not crucial and students have hardly noticed them...' On the other hand, I still think it helps to establish good relationships when the teacher is able to say sorry."¹²⁵

Let us see another commentary, which expressively and thoroughly illustrates the role of experience in relation to the issue. For its value as a whole, I have decided to present the comment in an unedited form: "Moreover, I learned that it is not important to be prepared for everything and that it is no shame not to know something, especially when it is not regarding English. It is much more important to stay natural, because we are all humans and, as everyone knows, humans are not perfect at all. It happened to me twice that I had to admit that I don't know anything (rules of table tennis)... And having done this, I felt that somehow, the students appreciate that I am not trying to act as Miss Perfect. This is also very important for me, because in the past, I feared that a situation would come, when I would be asked about something and that I would not know the answer. I had always thought that this must be very embarrassing and that the teacher has to know everything, otherwise the students won't trust him and take him seriously.

¹²⁴ Markéta K. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹²⁵ Bohdana P. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

This beautiful discovery has made my life of a temporary teacher a lot easier.”¹²⁶ This is an extremely valuable experience, which points at two important issues: 1) sincerity, as the basis for successful interpersonal relations, which in turn has a positive effect on class management; 2) this is purely ‘experienced knowledge’ and as such, it must be acquired in real teaching situations and also requires self-reflective skills on the part of a trainee (like in the case of the last-mentioned comment) or a feedback based on experience given by a mentor (like it was mentioned in the previous paragraph).

English teacher training approaches as reflected in relation to class management

The actual comments of trainees presented above show how different a real teaching situation can be from what one can expect based on pre-service training. This fact was documented mainly by inexperienced trainees. “I understood that not all activities are popular with all students. Even though I had year 1, their reaction was sometimes different (what one group liked, the second one was bored with; whereas pair work worked perfectly in one group, it was not such a good choice in the second group).”¹²⁷ Another inexperienced trainee formulated her findings exactly in line with what Wallace points out when speaking about how to evaluate trainees’ achievements: “I have learnt that what might have worked for one class does not have to work with another (think of the class as a group of individuals and in a broader context).”¹²⁸ It is important especially for inexperienced trainees to realize that they should evaluate their own work only in relation to the teaching situation that is taking place and thus avoid generalizations, which might lead them to unrealistic conclusions.¹²⁹

To be more specific, let us focus on error correction, which received a good deal of various comments. It is typical for the applied science model to focus on practising teaching skills individually. For example, Woodward offers an observation sheet, in which the trainees should observe a lesson and make notes about which mistakes the teacher corrects and which strategies he or she uses. The observation sheet offers twelve strategies which trainees should look for during their observations. The goal for trainees

¹²⁶ Hana S. (Group 2: inexperienced)

¹²⁷ Š, (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹²⁸ Pavla S. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹²⁹ Wallace 42.

is to discover the variety of strategies a teacher can use to correct students.¹³⁰ Now, if we compare this approach with the actual comments of trainees, we might see that truly even inexperienced trainees did not have problems to find ways how to correct their students. However, what made error correction a problematic issue was the context of a real situation. “I did not know when to correct the students and when to ignore their mistakes.”¹³¹ This brings us back to what Wallace, who stresses the importance of the experiential aspect of learning. Trainees should not become only followers of instruction but they should become open-minded flexible professionals who are able to effectively react on real situations.¹³²

Similarly, many other aspects of class management received comments which concerned the boundary between received and experiential knowledge. Let us see one more example, this time related to variety of techniques and activities. What the trainees might have learnt about variety of techniques and activities when being involved in the course of didactics offering the applied science approach appears to be logical as well as practical. The goal is to surprise, stimulate and motivate students and thus make them interested and active in the lesson, as Harmer describes the main idea hidden behind what he calls ‘the best kinds of lesson’: “If, for example, students spend all of that time writing sentences, they will probably get bored. But if, in that fifty minutes, there are a number of different tasks with a selection of different topics, the students are much more likely to remain interested.”¹³³ Nevertheless, when taken for granted, this approach might appear to be malfunctioning when put into real contexts. In the case of one of the inexperienced trainees this approach turned out to be quite the opposite of what it is supposed to be: “I tried to use as many games and activities as possible, but once I turned to one group to explain something, the other group started misbehaving.”¹³⁴

Another finding, which appeared to be interesting especially for the inexperienced trainees, was the indisputable overlap between hard skills (class

¹³⁰ Woodward 120.

¹³¹ Markéta K. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹³² Wallace 26.

¹³³ Harmer 5.

¹³⁴ Hana B. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

management in this case) and soft skills. Personal relationships, including those among students as well as between students and their teacher, might spoil what is otherwise a perfectly prepared lesson and at the same time create an entertaining and effective lesson out of a very poor preparation. The disadvantage of the applied science model is that it presents techniques and strategies as pure facts, which as a result leads trainees to apply them uncritically rather than analyze them by reflecting on the real teaching context. The effect might be that even what is otherwise a very effective organisational form – group work – becomes a disaster in a real teaching situation.¹³⁵

Summary

There appear to be two reasons why the experienced trainees gave a more positive overall evaluation of their experience with class management in their teaching practice than the inexperienced group of trainees.

First, experiential knowledge, as a core element of the reflective model, helped the experienced trainees acquire the ability to see the overall context of teaching situations and flexibly adjust their techniques, approaches and strategies accordingly. When being faced with unexpected and unwanted outcomes of teaching situations, the inexperienced trainees had serious difficulties to cope with it. Some inexperienced trainees, especially those from Group 2,¹³⁶ realized a relative unpredictability of real teaching situations. However, frequently their commentaries just stated the fact that something didn't work.

This brings us to the second reason for the difference in the evaluation of class management between the experienced and inexperienced trainees. The applied science model helped to develop hard skills needed for class management in a very concrete form and thus creating the illusion of reality. The skills were acquired separately from one another, as model situations in microteaching don't allow to work with the whole context of real situations. As a result, trainees seemed to take what they have learnt for granted, even in situations which required serious adjustments. They seemed to lack

¹³⁵ Wallace 42.

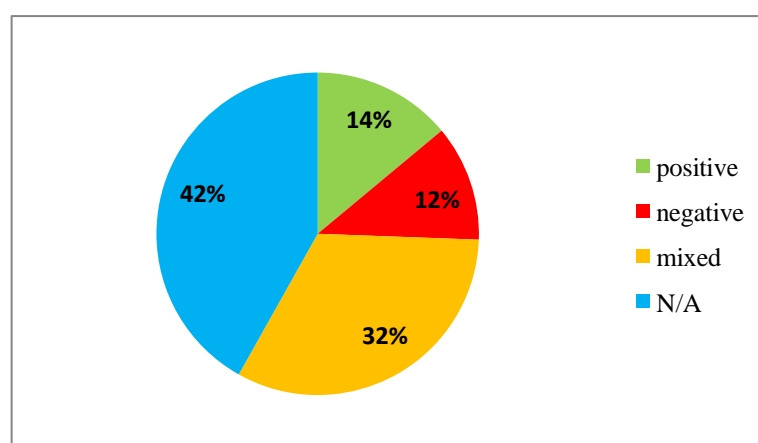
¹³⁶ For further information on group description see Chapter 3 Aims, methodology and resource materials, Teaching practice and resource materials.

reflective skills. On the other hand, the experienced trainees handled unexpected situations more successfully thanks to reflective skills, as their comments show. This is the main asset of the reflective model. It helps to develop reflective skills and thus leads trainees to better success in dealing with all teaching situations in their unpredictable variety.

4.1.2 Lesson planning

Among all the topics related to hard skills, lesson planning received the second highest attention by the trainees.¹³⁷ The overall evaluation of the topic was similar to the evaluation of class management.¹³⁸ These are two mutually related topics, since lesson planning serves as the basis for successful class management. This might give us an explanation why positive evaluation accounted for only 14 per cent, which was exactly the same result as with class management. Also, mixed evaluation prevailed over either positive or negative evaluation. However, the main difference from the evaluation of class management was a higher proportion of those trainees who did not give any comment on the topic at all. In addition, there was a lower score of negative evaluation especially among the inexperienced trainees.

Figure 4.3 Average evaluation of hard skills related to lesson planning

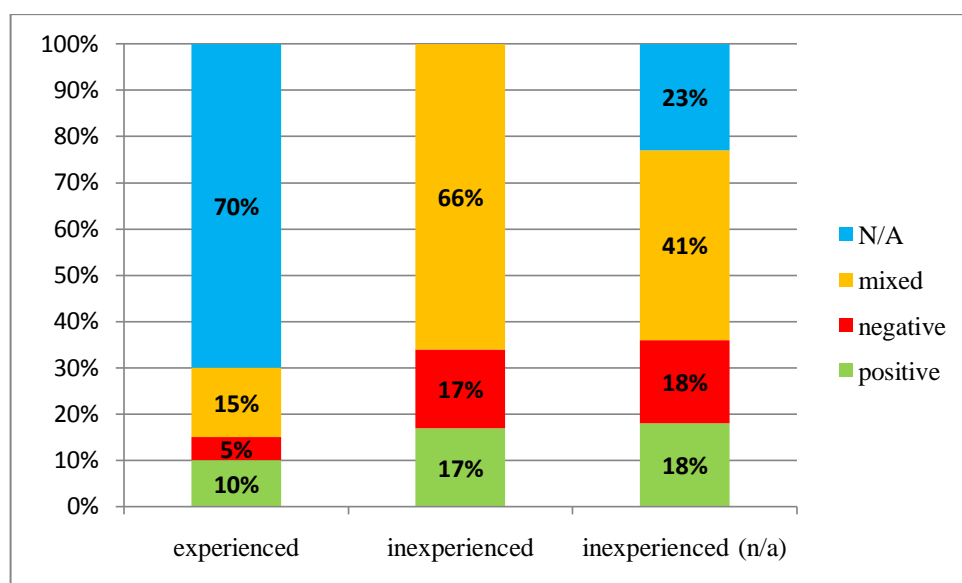


¹³⁷ See Table 4.1, Section 4.1 Hard skills.

¹³⁸ Compare Figure 4.1, Section 4.1.1 Class management and Figure 4.3, Section 4.1.2 Lesson planning.

Interestingly, for the experienced trainees, the topic was less important than for the inexperienced trainees. The difference was more than significant as shown below in Figure 4.4. We might suppose that the loss of importance of lesson planning with greater teaching experience was caused by two facts. Firstly, the trainees had mastered the skills needed for successful lesson planning sufficiently and thus it was not an issue for them anymore. Secondly, an overall development in other teaching areas had lowered the need for a thorough lesson plan. Nevertheless, for the inexperienced trainees reliant on received knowledge and consequently on the applied science model, lesson planning served, besides its other functions, as a tool to compensate for the lack of experience. In comparison with how the inexperienced trainees managed to deal with class management, lesson planning seemed to have been more successful and of no less importance.

Figure 4.4 Average evaluation of hard skills related to lesson planning in correlation with teaching experience



Trainees' comments

The majority of all comments on the topic were given by inexperienced trainees. Unlike with class management, trainees' comments were not as varied and were similar to one another in their contents. First of all, let us focus on negative comments and then continue with the positive ones and see whether they offer any suitable solutions.

Negative comments often referred to how demanding and time-consuming lesson planning was. “What I found the most demanding was the preparation for every lesson.”¹³⁹ As a result, some trainees felt a negative effect it had on their energy level and motivation. “I just did lesson plans during those two weeks and nothing else. In the middle of my teaching practice I felt quite exhausted and unmotivated which I finally overcame but I would prefer teaching practice to last longer and have more time to realize what went well and what didn't.”¹⁴⁰ The need to make a perfect lesson plan was propelled by fear of not being able to handle unexpected situations. “I can't improvise in the lesson so I try to think over the lessons into detail.”¹⁴¹ Despite the effort made to handle the problem, when tired, the fear grew stronger. “As the time and my exhaustion proceeded I slipped back to preparing too many activities for a lesson.”¹⁴²

Overdone lesson plans seemed to cause trouble rather than help. “My lesson plans are highly organized and sometimes I get lost in my own system.”¹⁴³ Consequently, also class management was influenced negatively. “I was mostly too diligent and planned that we would go through more exercises than we actually did. What is more, I even had some extra exercises for the emergency in case we finished earlier. The teacher afterwards told me that I do not give students enough time to think and I am constantly pushing them as if I was in a hurry.”¹⁴⁴ Here, we can see how lesson planning may have a decisive effect on both class and time management.

Primarily inexperienced trainees faced problems with time planning. “It was quite difficult to estimate how long each activity will take, therefore I prepared always more activities. Nevertheless, I usually did not manage to do all I had prepared for the lesson. I also had to be very flexible during the lesson and adjust my lesson plan. Time management was certainly one of my problems during my teaching practice.”¹⁴⁵ Lack of experience proved to be the main factor as described both by an experienced and inexperienced trainee. “Almost in every single lesson, I don't manage to do all the

¹³⁹ Martin L. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁴⁰ Zuzana U. (Group 2: inexperienced)

¹⁴¹ Zuzana U. (Group 2: inexperienced)

¹⁴² Zuzana U. (Group 2: inexperienced)

¹⁴³ Dana B. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁴⁴ Alžběta Z. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁴⁵ Daniela S. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

activities which I have planned. However, this problem might also stem from my being afraid of not having enough things to do in a lesson and therefore ‘exaggerating’ the amount of activities. This results, as I have noted above, in rushing my students through the activities. I guess, one needs some experience...”¹⁴⁶ This issue is discussed in detail in the next section, which is dedicated to time management.

The role of a mentor proved to be of a great help once again, as it offered advice based on experience: “So the preparation of the lessons was quite easy, I discussed with the teacher how much time I should dedicate to activities when I was not sure.”¹⁴⁷

Let us now focus on positive comments and see whether they faced similar issues and if so, then how they managed to cope with them successfully. Regarding the time spent and effort dedicated to lesson planning, the positive reaction of students was rewarding and motivating. “Teaching requires a lot of time spent by preparation and looking for materials. But it is worth doing. The biggest award is to observe students enjoying an activity that is also useful to them.”¹⁴⁸ However, it shouldn’t be the only motivation, in case the preparation doesn’t work out well in class. “This [lesson planning] took me four or five hours every day. The effort I made was sometimes worth it... On the other hand I felt extremely depressed if the lesson didn’t go as I expected.”¹⁴⁹

For many inexperienced trainees, a thorough lesson plan served as a confidence booster. “The preparation took me quite a lot of time because I knew I would be nervous, so I wanted to have many things written on my preparation sheet.”¹⁵⁰ Inexperience appeared to be a stressful factor, which was reduced by a good preparation. “I had been nervous and shaking days before I stepped in a classroom full of children... My preparations were elaborate and detailed, giving me at least a little confidence. However, as my teaching days were going on, I realized that there is nothing to be afraid of.” Here, we can see two assets of each of the teacher training approaches. A detailed lesson plan, typical for the applied science model, helped to give confidence and a firm ground before teaching practice. A proper reflection of real

¹⁴⁶ Pavla K. (Group 1: experienced)

¹⁴⁷ Markéta P. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁴⁸ Jitka P. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁴⁹ H. S. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁵⁰ Lucie D. (Group 2: inexperienced)

teaching situations, as supported by the reflective model, helped to develop and consolidate skills related to lesson planning in line with the reality.

Let us see some more examples of how experience had a positive effect on lesson planning. “I don't need well-arranged sheet of paper but I definitely need to have step-by-step procedure in my mind or near the hand before I enter the classroom.”¹⁵¹ Another inexperienced trainee faced difficulties when carrying out her lesson plans. She managed to reflect on the situations and came up with a conclusion: “So I should know more what to do and have the lesson plan and system more in my head than on the paper.”¹⁵² When analyzing negative comments, the trainees who had problems with overdoing lesson plans explained that it was because they were not able to improvise. This proved to be a skill which is a necessary complement to a good lesson plan. “One has to be able to improvise and not to be stuck to the lesson plan they've prepared.”¹⁵³ However, it is impossible to acquire this skill without being involved in real teaching situations and thus being exposed to the unpredictability of reality.

English teacher training approaches as reflected in relation to lesson planning

From the point of view of teacher training approaches, the applied science model uses lesson planning as a key element of teacher training. Lesson planning is understood to be a mental process which encompasses all the aspects of a lesson and thus serves as a comprehensive practice opportunity for inexperienced trainees. Trainees consider the age and number of students, their level of English, then go on to decide what exactly they want to do in a lesson followed by how they want to achieve it. Finally, it is also stressed that each lesson plan should also include possible risks of what may go wrong.¹⁵⁴ The last-mentioned step of the procedure is purely dependant on teaching experience. This proved to be the weakness of the applied science model based on the negative comments by trainees. Some of them exaggerated their effort to make a good lesson plan in order to compensate for their lack of experience. As a result, they felt exhausted, unmotivated and when the plan did not work out well in class, they even felt

¹⁵¹ Bohdana P. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁵² Dana B. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁵³ Hana B. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁵⁴ Harmer 122-123.

depressed. Nevertheless, the training in the style of the applied science model provided trainees with practice of skills needed to prepare a proper lesson plan and thus helped inexperienced trainees to cope with nervousness as it gave them confidence to teach the lesson.

The critique of this approach to lesson planning from the perspective of the reflective model points out that lesson planning is a relatively static process, removed from the teaching reality which is essentially dynamic. The focus is drawn to what happens to a lesson plan in a real lesson. The goal is to reflect on what makes the teacher change a lesson plan and how these decisions are made. Both lesson planning processes – before and during a lesson – are considered to share at least the same level of importance.¹⁵⁵ This proved to be the case, as even some inexperienced trainees managed to reflect on the fact that reality is unpredictable and a teacher must be flexible and able to alter and adjust a lesson plan according to what each particular situation requires.

Summary

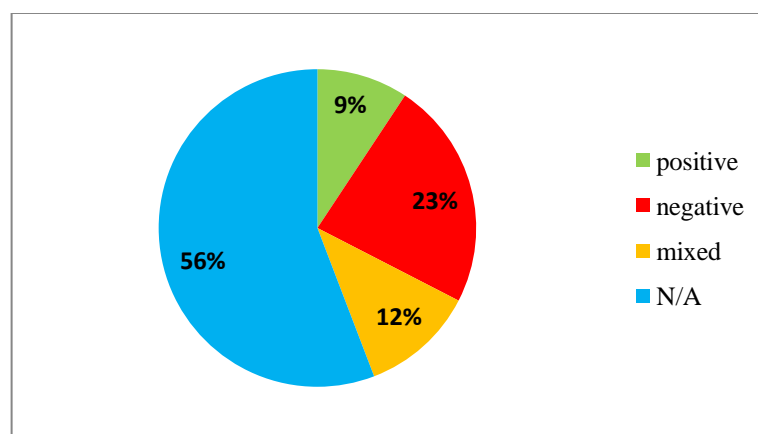
The applied science model appears to have helped trainees to develop skills needed to prepare a thorough lesson plan. This gave them confidence and lowered their nervousness stemming from inexperience. However, limitations of the model emerged when trainees were carrying out their lesson plans in real teaching situations. They were not ready to change their lesson plans when the situation required. The trainees who were able to apply reflective skills on such situations had a better overall experience with lesson planning. We might conclude that both teacher training approaches worked well when combined. When used independently, the applied science model did not turn out to be effective and in the case of some inexperienced trainees was even counterproductive. Teaching experience with real situations proved to be a necessary condition for successful development of skills related to lesson planning. It also proved to be the main reason why the trainees with greater teaching experience dedicated little attention to the topic.

¹⁵⁵ Wajnryb 74.

4.1.3 Time management

Similarly to lesson planning, time management is an integral part of class management. However, it is also discussed in a separate section, since it received many comments in the trainees' reflections. Unlike class management and lesson planning, time management was assessed mostly negatively (23 per cent). Positive comments accounted for only 9 percent among all trainees and mixed comments for only 12 percent, as documented in Figure 4.5. While analyzing skills related to lesson planning, time management proved to be an aspect of class management which caused a lot of problems chiefly to inexperienced trainees.¹⁵⁶

Figure 4.5 Average evaluation of hard skills related to time management



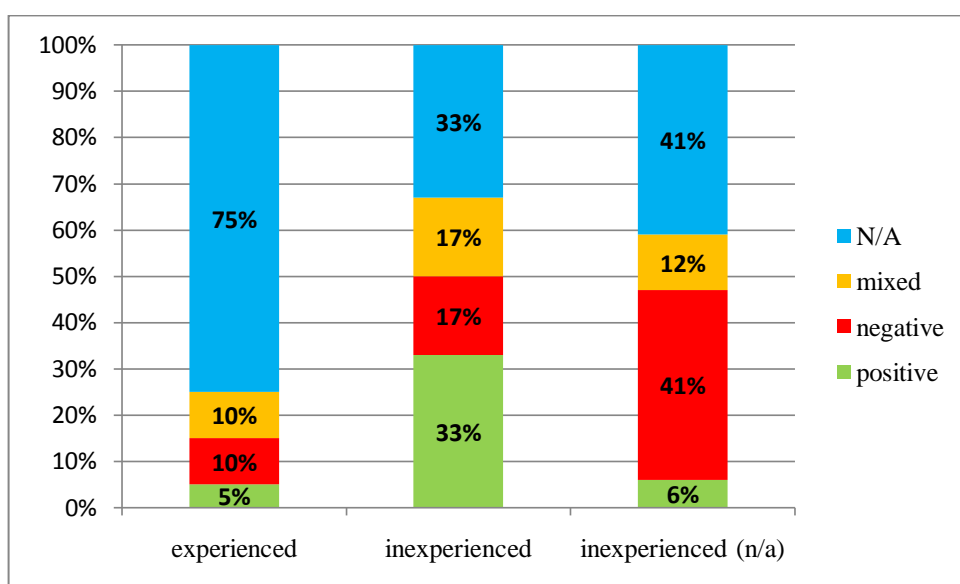
There is another similarity between time management and lesson planning: a big difference between experienced and inexperienced trainees in the number of comments given on the topic. We might therefore expect that experience will be a major factor in the development of skills related to time management. What is striking is the number of inexperienced trainees in Group 3,¹⁵⁷ who had negative experience with time management. There was only one trainee in the group who gave a positive comment (Figure 4.6). Presumably, such bad results were caused by lacking ability to estimate how much time should be dedicated to each part of a lesson and also the ability to improvise with time. The number of the experienced trainees who did not comment on

¹⁵⁶ See Section 4.1.2 Lesson planning, Trainees' comments.

¹⁵⁷ For further information on group description see Chapter 3 Aims, methodology and resource materials, Teaching practice and resource materials.

the topic at all might be explained by the fact that they did not experience any problems and had mastered and gained related skills and abilities sufficiently. So the abilities which many of the inexperienced trainees seem to have lacked can be acquired with experience.

Figure 4.6 Average evaluation of hard skills related to time management in correlation with teaching experience



Trainees' comments

As I have already mentioned, there was a significant overlap between skills related to time management and lesson planning. As I have presumed earlier in this section, many inexperienced trainees found out that they were not able to estimate how much time is needed for each part of a lesson. As result, their lesson plans could not be carried out properly and time management during their lessons was not good. “I usually did not manage to do all I had prepared for the lesson. Time management was certainly one of my problems during my teaching practice. Some activities which I thought would take five minutes lasted fifteen minutes and some activities I did not manage to do with the class at all.”¹⁵⁸ Let me add another comment referring to difficulties with

¹⁵⁸ Daniela S. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

lesson planning. “It took me naturally ages to prepare the lesson plans because I do not have such a good estimation of how much time the activities take.”¹⁵⁹

It was not only the inability to estimate time requirements during the lesson planning process which caused difficulties with time management during lessons. It was also another aspect of experience with real situations. Despite being in real teaching situations with real students, the trainees did not know the students and thus did not know their individual characteristics, needs, strong and weak points. In a relatively short time of the teaching practice, it was not possible for many trainees to get to know their students well enough. ““I suppose if I taught at the school for a longer time, it would be much easier to predict what is possible to manage in a particular class.”¹⁶⁰ It turned out to be problematic in relation to several aspects of class management, including time management. Although group work can be a very effective organizational form of class management, without proper knowledge of students the trainees had to deal with a problem how to select students for each group so that the groups work effectively. “One group worked faster than the other and I did not know what to do with the faster students.”¹⁶¹

The trainees who managed to cope with the last-mentioned issue more or less successfully commented on their flexibility and ability to improvise. “I had to react quickly as unexpected situations arose. One has to be able to improvise and not to be stuck to the lesson plan they've prepared.”¹⁶² However, it takes time and experience to develop related skills and strategies, as noted by one of the experienced trainees, who had been teaching for three years in company courses and reflected on how it helped her to develop certain skills. “Practising lesson planning has had a significantly positive effect on me. Firstly, it does not take up so much time as it used to (I have collected many materials and resources), but most importantly I have a better estimate of time and activities which we are able to do in a lesson.”¹⁶³ Through experience, she had also learned how to flexibly and effectively react to unexpected changes in a personal make-

¹⁵⁹ Alžběta Z. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁶⁰ Hana B. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁶¹ Š. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁶² Hana B. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁶³ Tereza V. (Group 1: experienced), as translated by Tomáš Holý..

up of a group of students. As we have seen in two previous sections, soft skills are an inseparable part of class management and thus also of time management, as another experienced trainee confirmed: “At first, the biggest problem for me was a time plan for given activities. I have realized that improvisation and the ability to adjust the lesson aim to the mood and atmosphere of the course [class] are very important skills of a teacher.”¹⁶⁴

Having no experience with improvisation, inexperienced trainees looked for other strategies to handle unexpected problems with time management. One of them was used to solve a situation when students manage to finish everything what was prepared for the lesson and there is time left. It was one of the major concerns among the inexperienced trainees but also of one of the experienced trainees. “I always had an extra activity for my students in case I was finished with the content of a lesson before the end of it.”¹⁶⁵ This strategy was also successful with class management. “The students worked at different paces, which I learnt to count with and tried to think of some additional activities in advance.”¹⁶⁶ Also, trainees praised university seminars for helping them create a portfolio of teaching materials. “The pack of activities we were asked to hand in during the methodology seminars proved again to be a great help.”¹⁶⁷

On the other hand, when used inappropriately for a given context, the strategy was counterproductive in its effect. Two trainees, one of them being experienced and the other inexperienced, realized the problem and reflected on it differently. The reflection by the inexperienced trainee lacked deeper insight into the problem and basically just stated basic facts. A reflection on the situation was given by her mentor but did not seem to work as an eye-opener for the trainee. “I was mostly too diligent and planned that we would go through more exercises than we actually did. What is more, I even had some extra exercises for the emergency in case we finished earlier. The teacher afterwards told me that I do not give students enough time to think and I am

¹⁶⁴ Martina K. (Group 2: inexperienced), as translated by Tomáš Holý..

¹⁶⁵ Hana B. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁶⁶ Zdeňka E. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁶⁷ Alžběta Z. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

constantly pushing them as if I was in a hurry. Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine how much time they need.”¹⁶⁸

In contrast, the experienced trainee used her reflective skills more constructively, being able to see the context and concluding how to improve: “This problem might also stem from my being afraid of not having enough things to do in a lesson and therefore ‘exaggerating’ the amount of activities. This results in rushing my students through the activities. I guess one needs some experience to be able to estimate how much time a particular activity might need.”¹⁶⁹

The inexperienced trainee concluded: “it is difficult,” whereas the experienced trainee said: “one needs some experience.” The difference might not be so apparent at first sight, but both conclusions are characteristic for reflections of either of the groups of trainees (experienced and inexperienced). Inexperienced trainees more frequently reached a dead end in their reflections. On the other hand, experienced trainees typically came up with a better insight and conclusions suggesting direction for further development.

English teacher training approaches as reflected in relation to time management

As we could see in trainees comments, time management requires practice with real situations. Possibly, this is the main reason why the applied science model doesn’t help to develop skills related to time management and doesn’t even have the ambition to do so.¹⁷⁰ It doesn’t necessarily mean that trainees do not get acquainted with the topic. Time management is an inseparable part of lesson planning and trainees are led to estimate how much time (specifically in minutes) will be needed for each part of their lesson plan.¹⁷¹ Although a big attention is given to lesson planning, the trainees are warned that what they prepare is still just a “prototype,” which may need to be flexibly

¹⁶⁸ Alžběta Z. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁶⁹ Pavla K. (Group 1: experienced)

¹⁷⁰ Woodward 3.

¹⁷¹ Harmer 171.

adjusted during the course of a lesson. Interestingly, Harmer admits the importance of experience in relation to time management, saying: “Good teachers are flexible.”¹⁷²

This area of teacher’s competence is dealt with in a much greater detail by the reflective model. It works with the presumption that inexperienced trainees find it very difficult to estimate time specifications for their lesson plans.¹⁷³ This is exactly in line with the trainees’ comments analyzed earlier in this section. The reflective approach to training teachers not only helps to develop better time planning skills, but also helps the trainees to make better decisions when and how to keep a lesson on course and when to make adjustments. After acquiring these skills, trainees might focus on a broader context of possibilities time management offers. These might refer to motivation, productivity or deeper understanding of students.¹⁷⁴ This fact was also commented on earlier by an experienced trainee, who spoke about the influence teacher’s time management skills might have on the mood and atmosphere in a class.

Summary

Successful development of skills related to time management proved to be heavily dependent on experience. As documented by the trainees’ comments, time management influences and is influenced by skills related to lesson planning. In the case of lesson planning, the applied science model turned out to be more or less beneficial for trainees. In the case of time management, it has nothing to offer. In contrast, the reflective model addresses exactly the issues faced by trainees, as analyzed above in this section. Since time management skills are impossible to develop outside real teaching experience, the role of the reflective model appears to be irreplaceable.

¹⁷² Harmer 6.

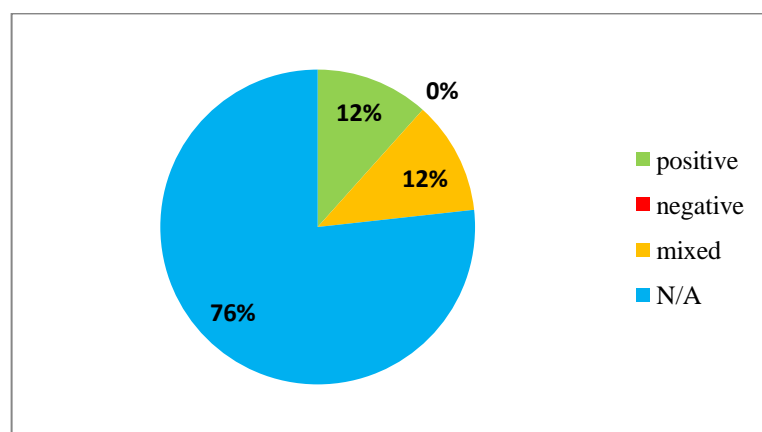
¹⁷³ Wajnryb 116.

¹⁷⁴ Wajnryb 116.

4.1.4 Use of L1 (Czech), L2 (English)

The topic is the first one of the remaining four in the category of hard skills. All of the remaining topics did not receive such a significant attention by the trainees as did the topics discussed in three previous sections.¹⁷⁵ The topic deals with how the use of Czech language in English classes can be avoided and if not, then when it is appropriate to use it. The topic did not receive any negative comments as documented below, in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7 Average evaluation of hard skills related to use of L1 (Czech), L2 (English)

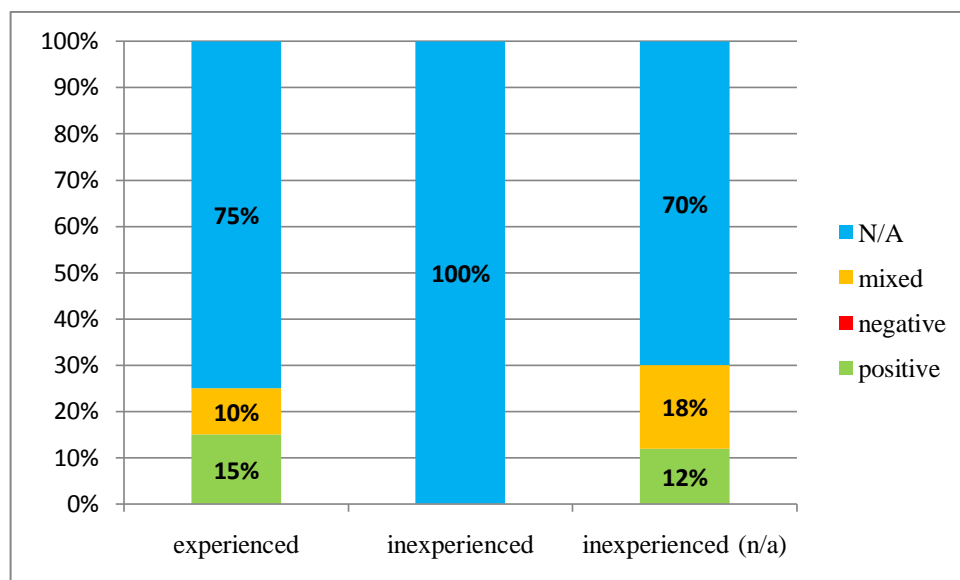


There was also another difference in trainees' evaluation between this topic and the previous three. With this topic, the amount of teaching experience did not seem to have any significant effect. The overall more positive score among the experienced trainees was insignificant in comparison with the score of the inexperienced trainees and the importance of the topic was almost equal. Among the inexperienced trainees, there was a difference between Group 2 and Group 3,¹⁷⁶ which was rather caused by the low number of comments overall, as there are only six trainees in Group 2.

¹⁷⁵ See Section 4.1 Hard skills.

¹⁷⁶ For further information on group description see Chapter 3 Aims, methodology and resource materials, Teaching practice and resource materials.

Figure 4.8 Average evaluation of hard skills related to use of L1 (Czech), L2 (English) in correlation with teaching experience



Trainees' comments

First of all, let us see some of the mixed comments. They either referred to the mentor and his or her approach to the use of Czech, or to the students themselves and their expectations. Regarding mentor teachers, one used Czech in some parts of the lesson, but it did not seem to have any negative effect. “I could see during my first observation, the teacher didn’t use English much. Most of comments, explanations and instructions were in Czech... But when I first came to the class and began speaking English, they [the students] didn’t have problems to understand me.”¹⁷⁷ In another case, the mentor used mostly English, but did not avoid the use of Czech completely. “In her lessons [mentor], she spoke nothing but English, resorting to Czech only when some difficult vocabulary or grammatical structures needed to be explained.”¹⁷⁸ Not only that these two comments show that the use of Czech did not seem to be a problematic issue, they also show how observations in classes which trainees are about to teach are beneficial for them.

¹⁷⁷ Petra K. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁷⁸ Martin L. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

Regarding the students needs and expectations, especially the younger and less advanced ones preferred the use of Czech for explanation of complicated grammar and also instructions. “They [the students] were not used to speaking in English during pair work. They preferred hearing the instructions also in Czech.”¹⁷⁹ One trainee suggested using translation for better clarity when explaining grammar: “I translate what I’m saying into Czech, so that the students have the chance to compare and be assured that they have understood. They even request the use of Czech with grammar.”¹⁸⁰ Another experienced trainee confirms and reminds of a possible risk this strategy brings: “I find it impossible not to use Czech in the beginner class... I usually try to say the things first in English and then repeat it in Czech, but I feel some students don’t make enough effort to understand because they know it will be re-explained in their mother tongue.”¹⁸¹

Despite giving the effort to use only English in classes, one trainee found out that it pays not to ignore what the students’ request: “When I started the practice I wanted to use English only. However when I wanted the students to understand some difficult grammar, I had to use Czech because otherwise the students seemed to be completely lost. The students appreciated this, as they wrote in their evaluation sheets I asked them to write for me.”¹⁸² There was also another reason why to use Czech to explain complicated grammar. “I speak mainly English. Czech is used to explain some parts of grammar. I find it purposive to compare English grammar with Czech grammar to show students that some structures are similarly used in Czech, because the students often worry about grammar too much and perceive it as something complicated and not making sense.”¹⁸³ Generally, when learning something new, we tend to compare with what we already know. This is a pedagogical truth, which is good not to ignore also in relation to this topic, as stated in the last-mentioned comment.

Summary

¹⁷⁹ Markéta P. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁸⁰ Markéta G. (Group 1: experienced), as translated by Tomáš Holý.

¹⁸¹ Pavla K. (Group 1: experienced)

¹⁸² Sylvie M. (Group 1: experienced)

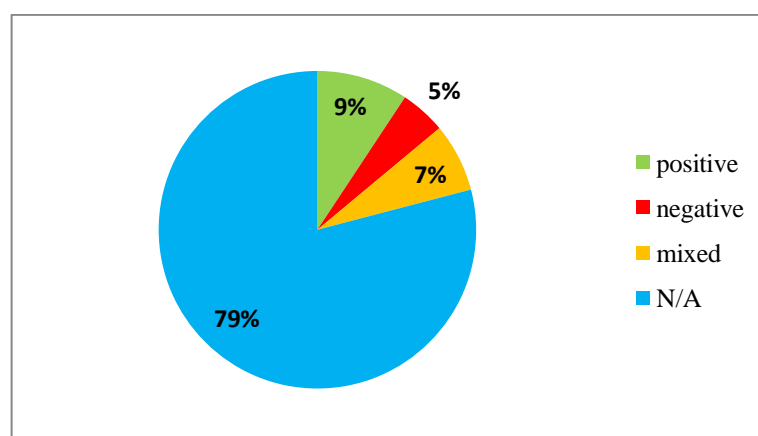
¹⁸³ Šárka K. (Group 1: experienced)

We might conclude that the use of Czech has turned out to be rather helpful than problematic, provided it is used only in situations which require it. Those were typically situations related to explanation of grammar to students of lower levels of English. The use of Czech had been a topic dealt with mainly in the seminars administered in the style of the applied science model. Trainees were told to avoid the use of Czech completely as English is sufficient if used properly. The reflections on teaching practice have revealed that the question whether to use Czech or not must be always considered in the context of a real situation. The main goal should be the benefit for student and that is heavily dependent on particular students and classes.

4.1.5 Giving instructions

For successful class management, it is necessary for a teacher to give instructions to students clearly enough for them to be able to carry out given tasks properly. As we have seen in the previous section, this issue overlaps with the use of Czech. It received similar attention by the trainees, but with some comments being negative (see Figure 4.9).

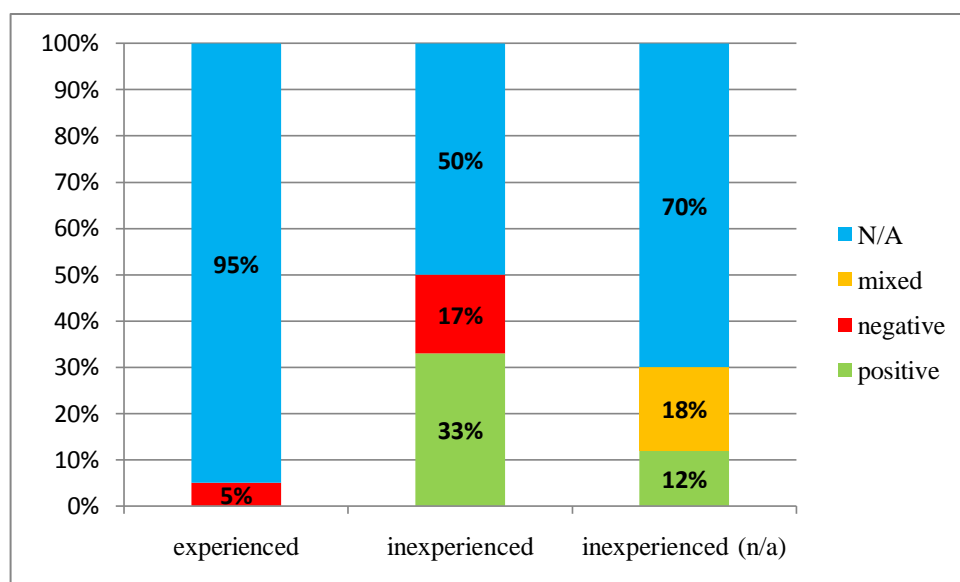
Figure 4.9 Average evaluation of hard skills related to giving instructions



Unlike in the case of the use of English, the amount of teaching experience appeared to have an effect on the development of skills for giving instructions. Hardly

anybody of the experienced trainees gave a comment on the topic, whereas a half of the trainees in Group 2 and 30 per cent in Group 3 of the inexperienced trainees did.¹⁸⁴

Figure 4.10 Average evaluation of hard skills related to giving instructions in correlation with teaching experience



Trainees' comments

Besides explaining grammar, giving instructions sometimes required the use of Czech, especially with younger students. This was discussed in the previous section. However, trainees were looking for ways to avoid the use of Czech as much as possible even with younger students. “With younger and elementary students one has to think all the time what vocabulary and grammar they can use so that the students understand it.”¹⁸⁵

Another inexperienced trainee described a variety of strategies that can be used in a succession according to how well the students have understood: “In some classes there were a few problems with understanding the instructions, but I tried to use English all the time. When the students did not understand, I tried to express the instructions in

¹⁸⁴ For further information on group description see Chapter 3 Aims, methodology and resource materials, Teaching practice and resource materials.

¹⁸⁵ Hana B. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

other words or to use gestures, or I asked some student in the class for translation.”¹⁸⁶ One student pointed out that not only simplicity and clarity are important, but also good timing of giving instructions. “I have learnt [that I should] give all the instructions before the students start working and make sure that everything has been explained properly.”¹⁸⁷

Once again, the experience with real teaching situations proved to be beneficial. Two trainees of the Group 2 of the inexperienced trainees realized improvement in comparison with the first placement of their teaching practice. “Last semester I also had some problems with giving instructions – sometimes it was not clear enough and the pupils did not know what to do. I did not realize similar situation this year so I think my ‘giving instructions’ was better.”¹⁸⁸

Summary

Although the topic was given a considerable amount of attention by inexperienced trainees and some of them had difficulties with giving instructions, they managed to find strategies which were successful. With greater experience the topic ceased to be an issue. The topic was dealt with in seminars of both teacher training approaches and in combination with the teaching practice the development of skills for giving instructions appears to have been satisfactory.

4.1.6 Use of audiovisual aids

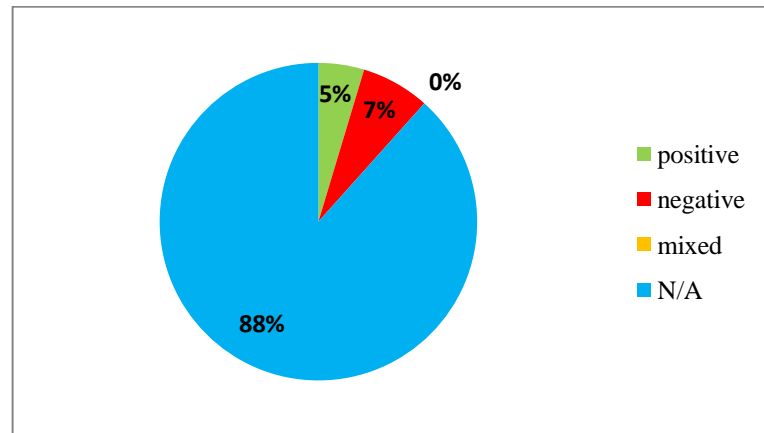
As I have already suggested in Section 4.1, the lack of interest in the use of audiovisual aids is striking especially in teaching languages. Only 12 per cent of all trainees gave a comment on the topic (see Figure 4.11). The development of audio-video technologies over the last decade has been tremendous. Czech schools have been equipped with up-to-date visual aids, which provide great possibilities of how to make lessons more effective, varied and attractive for students.

¹⁸⁶ Daniela S. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁸⁷ Pavla S. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

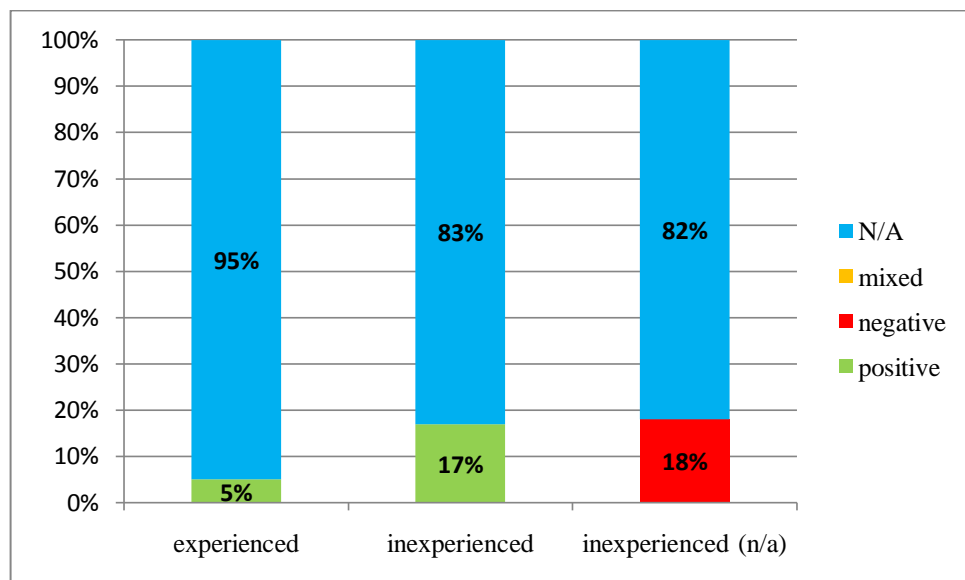
¹⁸⁸ Milada H. (Group 2: inexperienced)

Figure 4.11 Average evaluation of hard skills related to use of audiovisual aids



With such a low number of comments, it is not possible to make a clear conclusion whether experience had had an effect on the development of the skills for the use of audiovisual aids. However, the distinction between the evaluation of some inexperienced trainees from Group 3¹⁸⁹ and the others is apparent (see Figure 4.12).

Figure 4.12 Average evaluation of hard skills related to use of audiovisual aids in correlation with teaching experience



¹⁸⁹ For further information on group description see Chapter 3 Aims, methodology and resource materials, Teaching practice and resource materials.

Trainees' comments

The majority of comments referred to the use of whiteboard (or blackboard). Let us see the negative comments first. "I did not know how to use the blackboard in an effective way and I did not like my handwriting at all."¹⁹⁰ Not only handwriting was seen as a problem, but also organization of what is put on the board, like in the following case: "Sometimes when I look at the blackboard after the lesson, it's simply a terrible mess... They [pupils] are used to having everything on the board, Czech words written in one colour, English translation in another colour, underlined title at the top. My pupils were sometimes confused by my chaotic writing. This is something I have to pay attention to."¹⁹¹ Similarly to the skills for giving instructions, the amount of teaching experience was a factor: "I hope I have improved my writing on the board, which was probably my greatest challenge since the first teaching practice."¹⁹²

Only one trainee of all gave a comment related to an audiovisual aid other than a whiteboard or blackboard. "What I have learnt? Organization of listening: do not hurry, play the tape more times, if necessary, stop it after each longer sequence. What to be reflected: what is the first/second listening for?"¹⁹³ No trainee gave a comment on the use of a video, overhead projector, personal computer or interactive whiteboard. All these can be very beneficial in the classes of English.

Summary

Of the teacher training approaches, the applied science model pays a significant amount of attention to the procedures and skills related to giving listening exercises to students.¹⁹⁴ The trainees had been trained in this respect in their university seminars. Only one gave a comment on the topic, the others did not seem to experience any issues worth noting. Also, the use of a whiteboard had been practised in the seminars and despite some difficulties trainees did not seem to have any serious problems hard to be solved.

¹⁹⁰ Daniela S. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁹¹ Eva H. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

¹⁹² Anna W. (Group 2: inexperienced)

¹⁹³ Pavla S. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

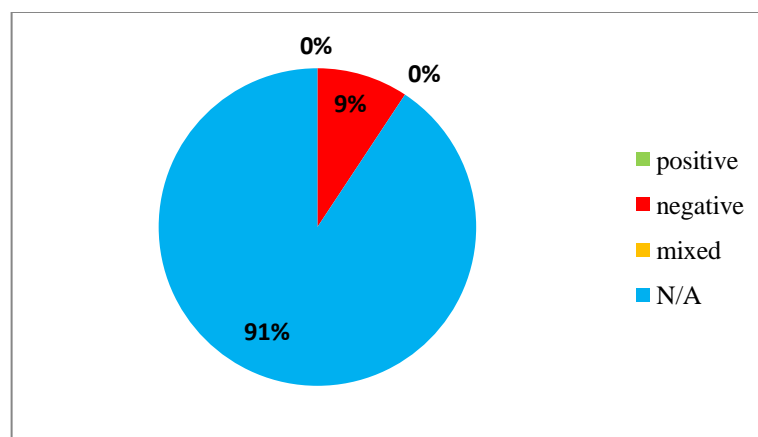
¹⁹⁴ Harmer 97-111.

Regardless the teacher training approaches, the equipment which was available in university classrooms was very limited and far from what is to be found at most primary and secondary schools. This appears to be the main reason why none of the trainees gave a comment on any other kind of equipment other than a whiteboard or a tape recorder. The trainees had had no chance to learn how to work with, for example, an overhead projector or interactive whiteboard.

4.1.7 Teacher's level of English

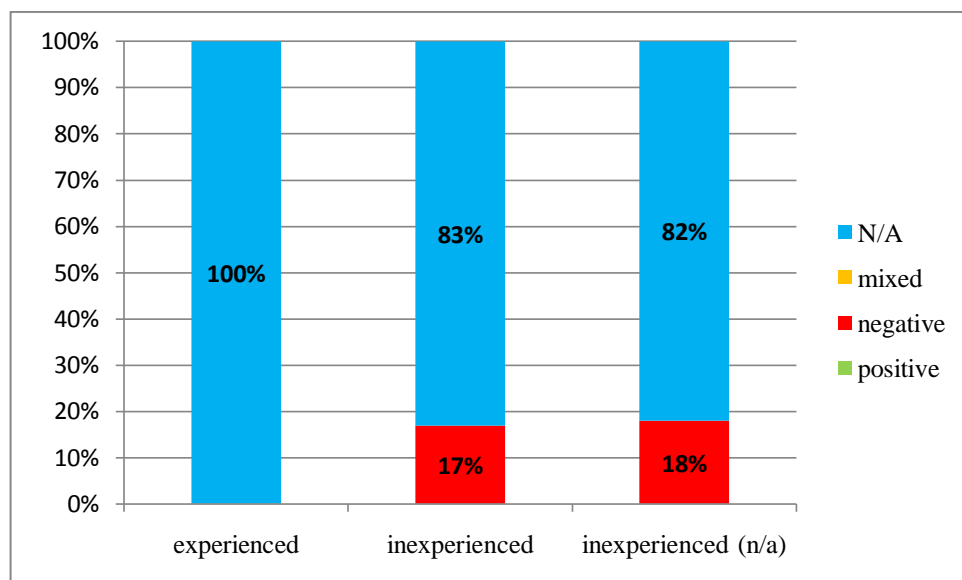
This is the last and least commented topic of all among those belonging to the category of hard skills. Only nine percent of all trainees reflected on their level of English, as shown below in Figure 4.13. All of them had negative experience with their language skills during the teaching practice.

Figure 4.13 Average assessment of hard skills related to teacher's level of English



None of the experienced trainees had the need to comment on their level of English. The topic turned out to be problematic only for a low percentage of the inexperienced trainees (see Figure 4.14). Regardless these figures, it can be taken as a general fact that language skills improve with practice.

Figure 4.14 Average assessment of hard skills related to teacher’s level of English in correlation with teaching experience



Trainees’ comments

The teacher’s level of English overlaps with soft skills when it comes to class management. It might have a negative influence on teacher’s self-confidence which might easily translate into lack of respect for the teacher among students. There was an analysis of this particular issue given in the section related to class management.¹⁹⁵

There was another reason why the teacher’s level of English is important to conduct lessons successfully, as noted by a student from Group 2:¹⁹⁶ “I feel my English limits me – I can’t express myself as freely as in Czech. I can’t react to students’ jokes and funny remarks as a result of which I seem a bit strict.”¹⁹⁷ The trainee felt that the effect her level of English had on class atmosphere was not according to her intentions.

Summary

We might conclude that the teacher’s level of English improves with experience. The trainees who felt that their level of English is insufficient experienced a negative

¹⁹⁵ See Section 4.1.1 Class management, The role of soft skills in class management.

¹⁹⁶ For further information on group description see Chapter 3 Aims, methodology and resource materials, Teaching practice and resource materials.

¹⁹⁷ Zuzana U. (Group 2: inexperienced)

effect it had or might have had on class atmosphere. The overlap with soft skills will be discussed also in the following sections. Regarding the teacher training approaches, it is not their aim to develop teacher's knowledge of general English. Therefore, no commentary is given in this respect.

4.2 Soft skills

In contrast to hard skills, soft skills are hard to be observed or measured. Sometimes, they are also called 'people skills'. They comprise of various aspects of interpersonal relations, for example, communication, cooperation, giving feedback, solving problems, resolving conflicts, observing, encouraging and motivating.¹⁹⁸

In the context of the teacher training approaches the trainees had been involved in, the distinction between the concepts of hard skills and soft skills is referred to by Wallace who represents the reflective model. However, he uses different terminology describing hard skills as simply 'skills' and soft skills as 'strategies'.¹⁹⁹ The terminology might be different, but the concepts are essentially the same. Soft skills employ both cognitive and affective human capabilities to deal with situations which are specific due to a human factor. I have opted to use the term soft skills as it is more up-to-date and closer to professional environment. Moreover, it allows the term strategy to be used for steps taken to handle a specific teaching situation, no matter whether it is a human factor or not that makes it specific.

Among all the topics related to soft skills, the most frequently commented one was class atmosphere. There was also another topic which received comments from more than a half of all trainees – students' discipline and teacher's authority. The other three remaining topics, regarding student motivation, age of students and teacher motivation were less frequent, as shown in the table below.

¹⁹⁸ Coates 1.

¹⁹⁹ Wallace 97.

Table 4.4 Topics related to soft skills raised in the trainees' reflections according to the number of occurrence – all trainees

1	Class atmosphere	73%
2	Student discipline and teacher authority	66%
3	Student motivation	41%
4	Age of students	30%
5	Teacher motivation	30%

As soft skills are based on experience with people, which means experience with all those involved in a teaching process in our case, we might expect the experienced trainees to be more successful in related teaching situations than the inexperienced trainees. As opposed to 'received knowledge', which was used primarily for the development of hard skills, soft skills might have been developed rather through 'experiential knowledge'.

If we compare the attention given to particular topics by the experienced and inexperienced groups of trainees (see tables below), we can see that the topic dedicated to comments on student discipline and teacher authority was less important for the experienced trainees than for the inexperienced ones. Here, there may be also one more reason to explain the difference than only the amount of teaching experience. General public in the Czech society have created a myth about behaviour of children. Laypeople tend to think that the discipline and behaviour of today's children is much worse than it used to be in the past. Obviously, there have been many changes in our society since the revolution in 1989 and they must have had some kind of effect on social and family values, and consequently on children. However, it is far from the reality to make generalizations like the one mentioned above. Teacher trainees with hardly any teaching experience do not have many opportunities to find out about the reality of the issue and thus might have had the tendency to expect what the myth warns against.

Similarly to the sections dedicated to hard skills, the topics are discussed in the order set by the frequency of occurrence (see Table 4.4). Also, the higher the number of occurrence, the more attention is given to the topic. The teaching areas which are covered by the topics related to soft skills have, or might have, a certain influence on

many other teaching areas, including those of hard skills. For that reason, this assumption is discussed in each of the following sections.

Table 4.5 Topics related to soft skills raised in the trainees' reflections according to the number of occurrence – experienced trainees

1	Class atmosphere	75%
2	Student discipline and teacher authority	55%
3	Student motivation	40%
4	Age of students	35%
5	Teacher motivation	30%

Table 4.6 Topics related to soft skills raised in the trainees' reflections according to the number of occurrence – inexperienced and inexperienced (n/a) trainees

Inexperienced

1	Class atmosphere	83%
2	Student discipline and teacher authority	67%
3	Age of students	33%
4	Student motivation	33%
5	Teacher motivation	33%

Inexperienced (n/a)

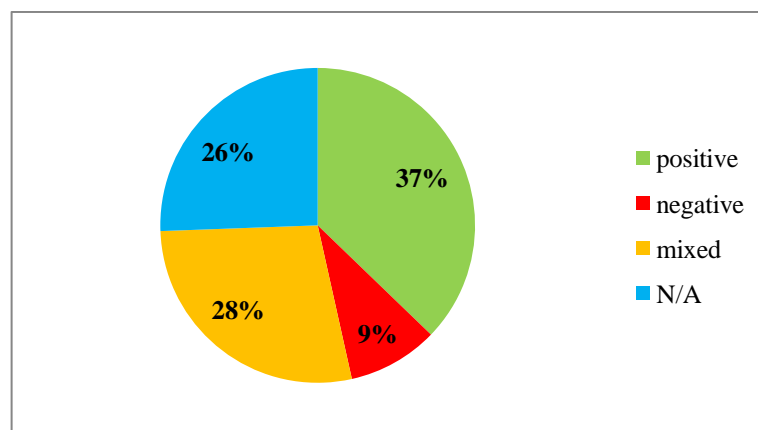
1	Student discipline and teacher authority	82%
2	Class atmosphere	71%
3	Student motivation	47%
4	Teacher motivation	29%
5	Age of students	24%

4.2.1 Class atmosphere

Class atmosphere was the most frequently mentioned topic of all (including hard skills) alongside general comments on teaching practice.²⁰⁰ The topic covers comments which described trainees' experience with a relationship between the teacher and students, relationships among students, cooperation, feedback, and mutual trust. Also, many comments referred to students' behaviour. As there was a significant number of them, they are discussed in a separate section.²⁰¹ The topic was considered important also for the influence it had on some of the hard skills, mainly those related to class management.

Most of the comments were positive (37%) and only nine percent of all trainees had negative experience. Mixed comments, which accounted for 28 per cent, described both positive and negative situations in a balanced ratio (see Figure 4.15). If we compare the evaluation of class atmosphere with class management, as this was the most frequent topic among hard skills, class atmosphere, as the major topic among soft skills, was met with a more positive overall evaluation.²⁰²

Figure 4.15 Average evaluation of soft skills related to class atmosphere



In the previous section, I have assumed that soft skills, as a concept based on human cognitive and affective processes in social interaction, would be influenced by experience. In other words, that the development of soft skills takes place in real

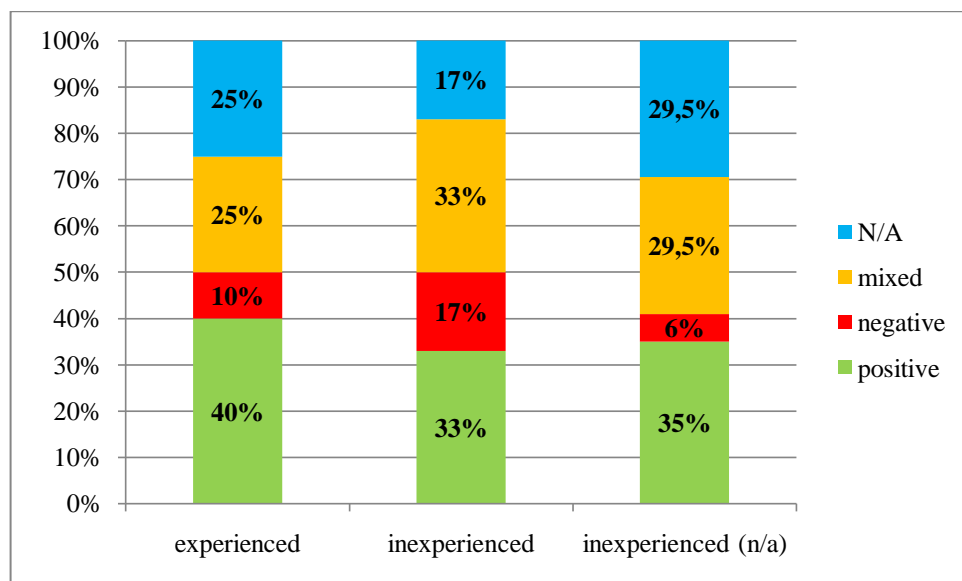
²⁰⁰ See Table 3.1, Chapter 3 Aims, methodology and resource materials.

²⁰¹ See Section 4.2.2 Students' discipline and teacher's authority.

²⁰² See Section 4.1.1 Class management.

situations. However, experience failed to be a factor, as shown in Figure 4.16. There was no significant difference in the evaluation of skills between the experienced and inexperienced trainees.

Figure 4.16 Average evaluation of soft skills related to class atmosphere in correlation with teaching experience



Trainees' comments: relationship between teacher and students

As mentioned above, the topic of class atmosphere comprises of several different areas. One of the most important ones was the relationship between the teacher and students. Some trainees found it difficult to establish a good relationship with students in just a small number of lessons. “Although five lessons spent in one class may seem to be a lot I only began to see all the different personalities of pupils.”²⁰³ Another trainee was more specific about the limitations the conditions of the practice had: “What can you do in just a two weeks time? You don’t know the mentor, you don’t know the students, and even the little something you manage to create in such a short time will be irretrievably lost.”²⁰⁴ An inexperienced trainee realized that the teaching practice offers little time also for students to get used to a new teaching style: “Every

²⁰³ Michal P. (Group 1: experienced)

²⁰⁴ Josef V. (Group 1: experienced), as translated by Tomáš Holý..

teacher has her or his own teaching style and it requires some time for students to get used to it and for a teacher to get them on her or his side, so that it is possible to cooperate successfully in the long term.”²⁰⁵

As noted one experienced trainee, the effect of only two weeks assigned for the practice can be negative both for a trainee and students. The trainee experienced bad behaviour and problems with discipline in a more advanced class of students. It affected her motivation and she gave up: “As a result I kind of gave up after first two lessons my motivation to enjoy the lessons with them and the rest of my work with that class was almost a punishment. If I had to work with them for a whole school year, I'm sure I wouldn't give it up so easily, but the vision of only two weeks accomplished my defeat and I think I didn't manage to establish any kind of relationship with them. If I am not able to establish a good relationship with my students and a supportive atmosphere, all my teaching abilities deteriorate.”²⁰⁶ This was not a frequent problem among the trainees, but the outcome of the situation is striking. It points at a more complex problem stemming from little time given for the practice. There might be a tendency of trainees to avoid solving problematic situations which occur during the practice and just wait for the practice to end. As a result, they might be focusing only on the teaching areas in which they are successful and their professional development would suffer. The question of the amount of time assigned for the teaching practice is discussed further in Section 4.3.

Some trainees reflected on how difficult it was to treat students equally. This topic was discussed earlier and proved to have an effect on successfulness of class management.²⁰⁷ However, the trainees who experienced these difficulties were able to reflect, also with a help from their mentor, and adjust their teaching accordingly. This issue received also a positive comment from a student with teaching experience from Morocco, which stresses the importance of not making any personal differences in relationships to students. “We [teacher and students] found a nice way to cooperate and not only they learnt English from me but I learnt a lot from them: they were my first

²⁰⁵ Lenka H. (Group 2: inexperienced), as translated by Tomáš Holý.

²⁰⁶ Tereza Č. (Group 1: experienced)

²⁰⁷ See Section 4.1.1 Class management, Balanced attention to all students.

‘real’ students in a real classroom and I understood that the best way to cope with teaching is the complete acceptance of people who are taught.”²⁰⁸

On the other hand, some trainees realized the risk of becoming too friendly with students. The question of finding the right balance can sometimes become an issue. “What is still unknown to me is how to find an adequate boundary in relationship with students. In my last teaching practice [the first placement], I acted rather unprepared and in a spontaneous and friendly way. Shortly I started to regret, because the pupils were abusing my attitude with no mercy. This time I wanted to stay neutral, it is hard to say how much I succeeded.”²⁰⁹ This comment was given by an inexperienced trainee. The reflective outcome of her experience is in line with what was one of the findings an experienced trainee: “If we are about to avoid devaluation of the leading role of a teacher resulting in a relaxed friendly form of a relationship, a certain distance between a teacher and student is a necessary condition of an effective process of learning.”²¹⁰

Relationships among students

Another dimension of relationships in a classroom are relationships among students. In some cases, they might have a strong influence on the whole class and process of learning. It does not seem to be realistic to expect a teacher to make everyone friends. Nevertheless, a teacher should support a friendly and cooperative environment in a class. Relationships among students are an inseparable part of it. “How to teach the students to be more considerate and polite to each other? This issue becomes essential when there are classes with a higher number of students.”²¹¹ Obviously, if a teacher should have a positive influence on the development of personal relationships among students, it cannot be done in a two weeks time, as another trainee concluded: “I’m looking forward to having my own students who I could bring up right from the beginning and teach them good English.”²¹²

²⁰⁸ Lucie V. (Group 1: experienced)

²⁰⁹ Lenka H. (Group 2: inexperienced), as translated by Tomáš Holý.

²¹⁰ Tomáš K. (Group 1: experienced), as translated by Tomáš Holý.

²¹¹ Eva H. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

²¹² H. S. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

Giving and receiving feedback

Interestingly, the question of giving feedback was seen from two different points of view. The experienced trainees reflected on how beneficial it was to give students a lot of positive feedback. On the other hand, the inexperienced trainees rather spoke about how important it was for them to receive positive feedback from their students. It seems that lack of experience led to the need of receiving feedback, whereas more experience stimulated giving rather than receiving feedback.

One inexperienced had the opportunity to teach two classes which were very different when it came to giving feedback: “They seem to endure the lesson with no trace of smile or any other emotion. This was suffering for me. I did not recognize whether they know this well [or not]. They showed no emotions during the lessons.”²¹³ We can see that it was very hard for the trainee to analyze the students’ needs and what they already knew, once there was hardly any feedback visible on their part. The other class was almost the opposite: “You as a teacher can feel their energy which supports you and helps you very much. You feel that they are with you all the lesson that they are interested in a way what’s going on.” Positive feedback from students was more frequent and proved to be very helpful for trainees. “When I was nervous and made mistakes, even when explaining grammar, the group's behaviour, cooperativeness and genuine interest supported me and helped me a lot.”²¹⁴

Positive feedback was also very helpful for students as it led to better cooperation and higher activity, as documented by some of the experienced trainees. “I try to praise those students who answer correctly, whose answers are original or simply those who cooperate with me. When I correct my students, I try to do it smiling since I don't want them to feel uncomfortable. I want them all to participate in my lesson.”²¹⁵ As another experienced trainee added, positive feedback raises students’ interest to participate in a lesson. In the case of this trainee, it came by surprise to her and she was glad for the experience: “I also found out (and was even surprised) to what extent praising students encourages them, so I think it's really important to make students feel

²¹³ Jitka P. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

²¹⁴ Zdeňka E. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

²¹⁵ Anna B. (Group 1: experienced)

a teacher believes in them and appreciates the effort they make: positive feedback does matter no matter how old/young students are.”²¹⁶

However, negative feedback might have exactly the opposite effect when it is not applied appropriately, like it happened to one inexperienced trainee: “At the beginning of the lesson, I made it clear that I cannot ignore if they don’t do their homework. I did not let it go and asked whether they thought a teacher would give them all the answers, etc. The rest of the lesson was quite difficult. I finished the lesson earlier, totally disgusted and grateful that I would never have to teach the group again. I could not understand why it all developed like that.”²¹⁷ The situation speaks about two things. First, when negative feedback is used to raise cooperation and motivation of students, it is a strategy very sensitive to many other interpersonal factors and as such could be very risky. Second, if the trainee had been a regular teacher of the students, she would have had to solve the situation instead of being glad not to teach them ever again. If this situation was not solved, it could spread in various forms over a longer period of time and have a major influence both on the development of the students in English and the professional development of the teacher. The main point is that in relation to soft skills, as well as it is to hard skills, the role of reflective skills – being able to reflect and solve – is very important not only in pre-service training, but also for further professional self-development.

Safe classroom climate

Many both experienced and inexperienced trainees stressed the importance of creating safe classroom climate, so that the students are not afraid to speak English. For some, it was a discovery of a great importance: “During 60 minutes, I wasn’t able to get more than just one sentence answers from the group. Eventually, it turned out that it was caused by shyness and not being used to verbal communication during the lessons of English. In the end, I was able to make everybody speak, which I consider to be my biggest pedagogical achievement.”²¹⁸ This is also a very good example of successful application of self-reflective skills by the trainee. The result was beneficial both for the

²¹⁶ Pavla K. (Group 1: experienced)

²¹⁷ Lenka H. (Group 2: inexperienced), as translated by Tomáš Holý.

²¹⁸ Tereza V. (Group 1: experienced), as translated by Tomáš Holý.

students and the trainee. Shyness is usually accompanied by the fear of making a mistake. “I try to act in the way, so that the students are not afraid to make mistakes.”²¹⁹ What was also mentioned as regards the safe classroom climate was the question of trust between the teacher and students. “I think it is important for them to trust the teacher and ask for help and advice.”²²⁰

English teacher training approaches as reflected in relation to class atmosphere

Class atmosphere is dealt with by the applied science model as well as the reflective model. Both approaches stress that it is important to create a class atmosphere in which the students can speak out without ‘fear of rejection’.²²¹ Also, experimentation and questions should be encouraged.²²² The trainees’ successful strategies related to class atmosphere were in accordance with that: “I believe it is really significant for students at least to get the feeling that they do not have to be afraid of asking anything, that they are free to give opinions, and that the teacher is ready to help them.”²²³

Furthermore, the applied science offered a number of practical tips, for example, crouching down when working with students in pairs, use of group work to create a more cooperative and less hierarchical working atmosphere, or choosing activities for the sake of changing class atmosphere.²²⁴ However, many trainees’ comments reflected on issues which are not dealt with by either of the approaches. This seems to be their weakness. Especially if we take into account the fact that the topic received the highest number of comments alongside general comments on teaching practice.

Summary

The development of soft skills related to class atmosphere doesn’t seem to have been affected by teaching experience, though only a small number of trainees gave negative comments. The teacher training approaches do not offer answers to most of the issues experienced by the trainees, as discussed above. The only difference seemed to

²¹⁹ Markéta G. (Group 1: experienced), as translated by Tomáš Holý.

²²⁰ Silvie Š. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

²²¹ Wajnryb 96.

²²² Harmer 10.

²²³ Silvie Š. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

²²⁴ Harmer 27, 32, 135.

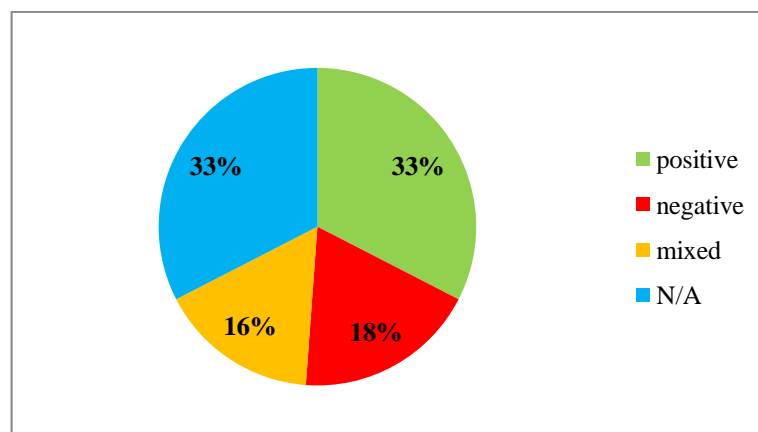
be the role of self-reflective skills. Those trainees who faced difficulties with class atmosphere and were able to apply their reflective skills effectively succeeded in solving the problems. On the other hand, the trainees who failed to constructively reflect on the issues they were facing found no solution and were rather happy that the teaching practice would soon end. Essentially, soft skills are closely related to personal characteristics of an individual. However, every individual trainee should be able to use reflective skills to be able to cope with unknown situations related to class atmosphere and learn within the context of her or his personal set-up of soft skills.

4.2.2 Student discipline and teacher authority

The title of this topic describes two mutually connected aspects of teaching. Besides the use of these two terms, trainees also spoke about behaviour of students in their reflections. The topic was the fourth most frequent of all topics and second among soft skills.²²⁵ Positive comments prevailed with 33 per cent, whereas negative and mixed comments accounted for 18 and 16 per cent respectively (see Figure 4.17). As I have suggested in Section 4.2, the attention given to the topic might have been partially caused by the assumption of general public about nowadays children. Parents, grandparents, the media, or even some teachers speak about how bad children's behaviour has become in comparison with previous generations. Regardless whether it is true or not, it is a topic that draws attention of laypeople as well as future teachers like in our case.

²²⁵ See Chapter 3 Aims, methodology and resource materials, Figure 3.1.

Figure 4.17 Average evaluation of soft skills related to student discipline and teacher authority



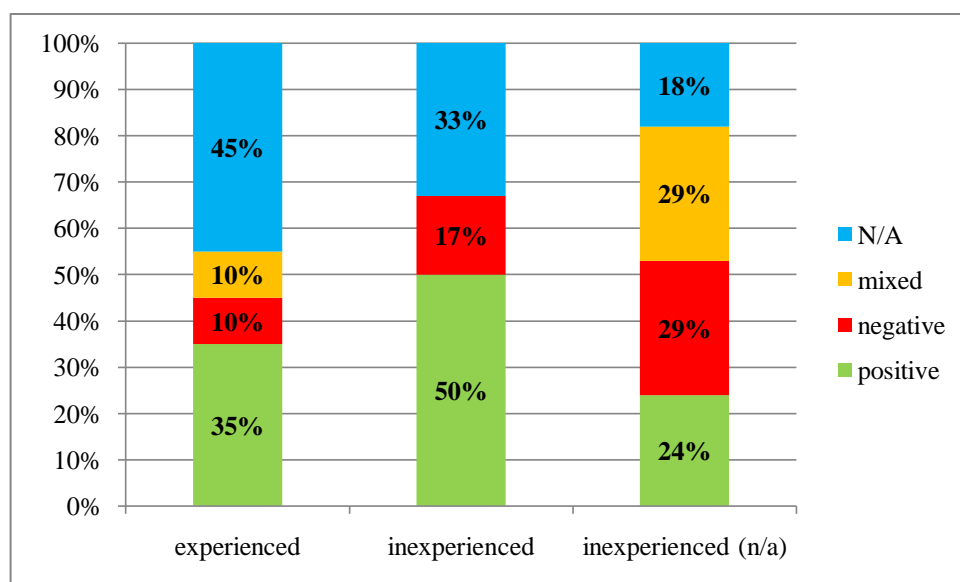
With the previous topic, the amount of teaching experience did not prove to have any significant effect on skills related to class atmosphere and thus to soft skills. However, with the topic of student discipline and teacher authority the situation was different. First, the amount of interest in the topic was much lower among the experienced trainees than among the inexperienced trainees, especially regarding Group 3 (see Figure 4.18).²²⁶ Alongside class management and general comments on teaching practice, this was the most important topic of all for Group 3 (82%). In comparison with Group 1 and 2, there was a much higher number of mixed and negative comments and also significantly lower number of positive comments.

Interestingly, the trainees of Group 2 did not experience difficulties in such an extent as those of Group 3, despite being inexperienced as well. The question is what caused these differences. The amount of teaching experience as the only factor seems arguable. It is more likely to be a combination of more factors. As I have mentioned earlier in this section, another reason might be the fear of facing difficulties with students' behaviour especially among the inexperienced trainees. Also, the differences among students and teaching conditions at language schools and grammar schools might have been a factor, since many of the experienced trainees carried out their practice in language schools and most of the inexperienced at grammar schools. The

²²⁶ For further information on group description see Chapter 3 Aims, methodology and resource materials, Teaching practice and resource materials.

successful application of reflective skills is expected to be influential, like in the case of class atmosphere.

Figure 4.18 Average evaluation of soft skills related to student discipline and teacher authority in correlation with teaching experience



Trainees' comments

One of the above mentioned factors which might have supported a higher amount of interest together with worse behaviour of students among the inexperienced trainees was the assumption that today's children are much worse in this respect. Although it is just an assumption and not a proven fact, it is tempting to believe it especially for those who don't actively participate in the teaching process. Let us see a comment of an inexperienced trainee just to illustrate: "I had always thought that the thing that can disappoint us [teacher trainees] ... must be the behaviour of students."²²⁷ However, the trainee continues with her comment to conclude that the problem is much broader: "But in reality the problem is further more complicated and, at least as I see it, it is not the students where the roots of this miserable situation come from." Despite seeing the cause of the problem with discipline elsewhere, most of the other trainees saw a connection with either the age of students or their level of English.

²²⁷ Veronika V. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

Students' age and level of English

The younger and less advanced students were considered to be less concentrated and consequently more disturbing by a number of inexperienced trainees: "As for the youngest group, maintaining discipline was perhaps the most difficult aspect for me. Sometimes I did not know how to react to some students' off-topic remarks and comments, especially in the last lesson when the supervisor teacher [mentor] was absent."²²⁸ We might assume that the amount of experience did have an effect in this case. The needs, values, and also language are very likely to be different with the younger students and teacher trainees, as there is a difference in age between them. One needs to have experience with what children like or dislike to be successful as their leader, or at least, to be able just to understand them sometimes.

In the case of an experienced trainee the question of young age was seen from a different perspective: "When comparing teaching adults at the language school with teaching children in a school camp, I simply prefer focusing on the teaching itself to solving problems with a discipline."²²⁹ Unlike many experienced trainees, the inexperienced hadn't had the chance to teach people of various ages. Whether it was an advantage or disadvantage is a question. Nevertheless, the comment shows that experienced trainees may have the tendency to avoid teaching children, so that they don't have to face negative emotions in the form of bad behaviour. As another experienced trainee added, adults usually have their own motivation why to study the language, whereas with children it is more difficult because their interests are often connected with everything else but studying something.

That is a very narrow point of view as it doesn't take into account the other side of the whole problem – the sincerity and power of positive children's emotions, as pointed out by another experienced trainee: "The pupils were mostly active and I found out that they had learnt all what I had intended. It was a big relief for me to realize that what I like about the work with children is present also in a classroom. What I mean is that little spark in the eye, which lights up when a child has a success, or receives your

²²⁸ Zdeňka E. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

²²⁹ Irena K. (Group 1: experienced)

praise, or when you say something interesting, or you just say hello. And when you are able to see the spark, it gets inside you and you realize that you can't live without such sparks. I hope this is how people become teachers."²³⁰ Can a teacher trainee become a complete teacher without having the experience described in the last-mentioned comment? There might be the risk that experienced trainees will rather continue teaching adults, to which they have become more or less accustomed to, and thus miss the opportunity to learn to see and enjoy the bright side of children's emotions.

Most of the trainees had the opportunity to compare teaching at a lower secondary school in the first placement of the teaching practice and teaching at an upper secondary school in the second placement. "When teaching at primary school, my biggest problem was that with the discipline. I'm happy to say that students aged 15 and more who study at grammar school are much more disciplined and cooperative, even though I sometimes feel they don't enjoy the lesson."²³¹ This brings us to what may be the cause for lack of discipline among older and more advanced students – it is more difficult to raise their interest. "I had a constant feeling that the majority of the class was constantly bored, never mind what materials I brought and how I tried to make the textbook more interesting. This class has a real good knowledge of English..."²³² However, this could happen in any class of more advanced students, regardless their age. Then, the reason could be, for example, an inappropriate level of their textbook: "The only exception was 1.B – there were twelve year old and it was very difficult to make them concentrate... students already knew the things I was teaching them and they had to be bored."²³³ In addition to this, one trainee also noted the difference between teaching boys and girls, as boys were much louder than girls.

Teacher authority

Besides student discipline, this topic also covers the issue of teacher authority. The issue was explicitly commented on by trainees of all groups. Interestingly, two inexperienced trainees experienced problems with discipline, regardless whether they

²³⁰ Josef V. (Group 1: experienced), as translated by Tomáš Holý.

²³¹ Bohdana P. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a)).

²³² Tereza Č. (Group 1: experienced)

²³³ Hana B. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

perceived themselves as an authority or not: “The biggest trouble I had to face was the lack of discipline. I remember one unpleasant situation when the students were deliberately rude and cheeky. I ascribe this behaviour partly to their age and to the fact that I was ... only a student teacher who did not wake so much respect in them. The other reason lies in me being no natural authority. When students find out that the teacher is quite nice they start misusing it.”²³⁴ The conclusion the trainee made pointed to three different reasons for the lack of discipline in her class. Firstly, she saw a disadvantage in the form of the teaching practice, specifically the fact that the trainees get to teach a class, which is otherwise taught by someone else, for just two weeks. This topic is further discussed in Section 4.3. Secondly, she concluded that being nice to students could turn into bad behaviour. This issue is discussed later in this section. Thirdly, she perceived herself as a person who doesn’t show much authority by her nature.

In contrast, the other inexperienced trainee perceived herself as someone with sufficient amount of authority, but she faced difficulties with student discipline as well: “Another problem I had was the discipline. I have never had these problems. I have always thought that my authority is sufficient. But few students aged 16 showed me it's not so easy... It was almost unbearable, I couldn't concentrate and I don't know whether I can be a teacher if I imagine working all days with students like this one.”²³⁵ It is interesting to compare reflective skills of these two trainees, both inexperienced. The first one came up with three possible reasons why the situation had developed in such an unfavourable way and thus it allowed her to react to at least two of them in the future. The second finished the whole topic with exactly what is cited above, which means with no constructive conclusion. Instead of reaching conclusions for further self-development, she expressed doubts whether she still wanted to be a teacher. In the context of future professional development, reflective skills proved to be a key factor, like we have seen with many other topics in previous sections. Also, these two examples show that whether a teacher perceives her or himself as a person with natural authority doesn’t necessarily lead to better student discipline.

²³⁴ Alžběta Z. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

²³⁵ Dana B. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

Discipline vs. friendly atmosphere

Another issue which was raised by some trainees was the question of appropriate amount of friendly atmosphere in a class. As one of the two last-mentioned trainees concluded, when there is a too friendly atmosphere, students may misuse it. On the other hand, when there is too much discipline, it prevents the teacher from getting enough feedback: “They seem to endure the lesson with no trace of smile or any other emotion. This was suffering for me. I did not recognize whether they know this well [or not]. They showed no emotions during the lessons.”²³⁶ This topic was raised also in the previous section. One of the experienced trainees came to a conclusion that there must be a clearly set balance between a friendly atmosphere and discipline. He pointed out that to maintain a productive and efficient working atmosphere, it is necessary for a teacher not to become too friendly with students. The authority of a teacher must be nurtured right from the beginning of a course. Teacher and students must clearly know what to do.

One of the inexperienced trainees managed to find an ideal balance between a friendly atmosphere and discipline in her class: “I am happy to say that I maintained a good relationship with the learners while I managed to keep order and the students' attention in the class including two lessons with the absence of my observer. I tried to involve all the students including the silent ones. I have learnt about my learners that they are able to keep their attention if they enjoy a lesson, if they are motivated and interested in what we are doing, and if they are assured there's nothing to worry about... I think it is important for them to trust the teacher and ask for help and advice.”²³⁷ The comment is cited in this length for reason. It shows most of the key factors which decide whether there is an effective balance of discipline and friendly atmosphere and also whether a teacher is respected by students. All the factors have one in common: they all reflect students' needs. In other words, if students' needs are met satisfactorily, it raises the chance for having no problems with student discipline or teacher authority.

²³⁶ Jitka P. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

²³⁷ Silvie Š. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

English teacher training approaches as reflected in relation to student discipline and teacher authority

The applied science model offers two approaches to the development of skills for maintaining student discipline and teacher authority. First, group discussions on the topic are encouraged among trainees and their aim is to elicit individual strategies of trainees and share them with others.²³⁸ The second approach is typical for this model. It offers practical tips, which should help trainees to improve and maintain discipline in a classroom. For example, seating arrangement, specifically sitting in orderly rows, helps the teacher to keep eye contact with students and makes it difficult for them to disturb a lesson.²³⁹ Also, the difference between teaching adults and children is stressed.²⁴⁰ As we have seen above, this issue was discussed by some experienced trainees.

The reflective model does not deal with the issue of student discipline or teacher authority any further. Wallace makes only a brief reference to the topic in his critique of the applied science model. The ambition to tackle this issue scientifically through empirical research is seen as illusionary. He adds: “Many of today’s teachers will wonder when the expected improvements will take place, and some would argue that the problems of discipline have, in fact, got worse over the last two decades.”²⁴¹ Truly, this is a frequent opinion among the general public in this country. The trainees did not confirm it, but did rather the opposite. One of the inexperienced trainees had her own explanation for the general assumption about today’s children: “They often say that younger generation misbehave and have a lot of problems. In my opinion young people are more or less the same. It is the conditions they live in that are changing and thus demanding certain reaction from them. A teacher is supposed to respond as well... It is worth trying to understand and be interested in what is the new, young generation like.”²⁴²

²³⁸ Woodward 138, 183.

²³⁹ Harmer 19.

²⁴⁰ Harmer 11.

²⁴¹ Wallace 11.

²⁴² Silvie Š. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

Summary

The difference in the overall evaluation of student discipline and teacher authority between the experienced and inexperienced trainees was caused by several factors. The positive effect of teaching experience had two forms. First, it helped the experienced trainees to find functional strategies to maintain student discipline. Second, it also helped them to develop other teaching skills, which as a result led to a better fulfilment of students' needs and thus better student discipline. Nevertheless, the factor of personal characteristics of a teacher was also influential as some of the experienced trainees faced serious difficulties with student discipline as well.

The question, whether a teacher perceives her or himself as natural authority, did not prove to have any influence on student discipline. Although the assumption that today's children are worse in their behaviour than the children of previous generations was mentioned by some trainees, it did not prove to be generally true. Many trainees ascribed their difficulties with student discipline to the age and level of students. Some found it difficult to make the younger and less advanced students less disturbing and more concentrated and some found it difficult to make the older and more advanced students more active and interested.

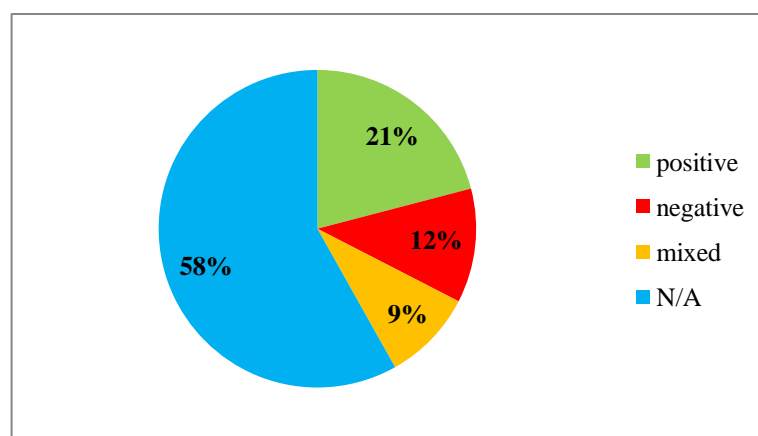
Although the topic is dealt with by especially the applied science model to some extent, either of the teacher training approaches does not offer answers to many of the questions raised by the trainees. However, reflective skills, which are typical for the reflective model proved to be beneficial and in the case of some trainees had a crucial influence on their prospects of further professional development. This could also explain the difference in evaluation between Group 2 and 3.

4.2.3 Student motivation

Student motivation received comments from 41 per cent of all trainees. The comments had much in common with two previously discussed topics – class atmosphere and student discipline and teacher authority. These teaching areas proved to be mutually influential and thus there is a certain amount of overlap in some of the

trainees' comments. Of the 41 per cent, more than a half had positive experience with student motivation during their teaching practice. The second half comprised of a relative balance of mixed and negative comments (see Figure 4.19).

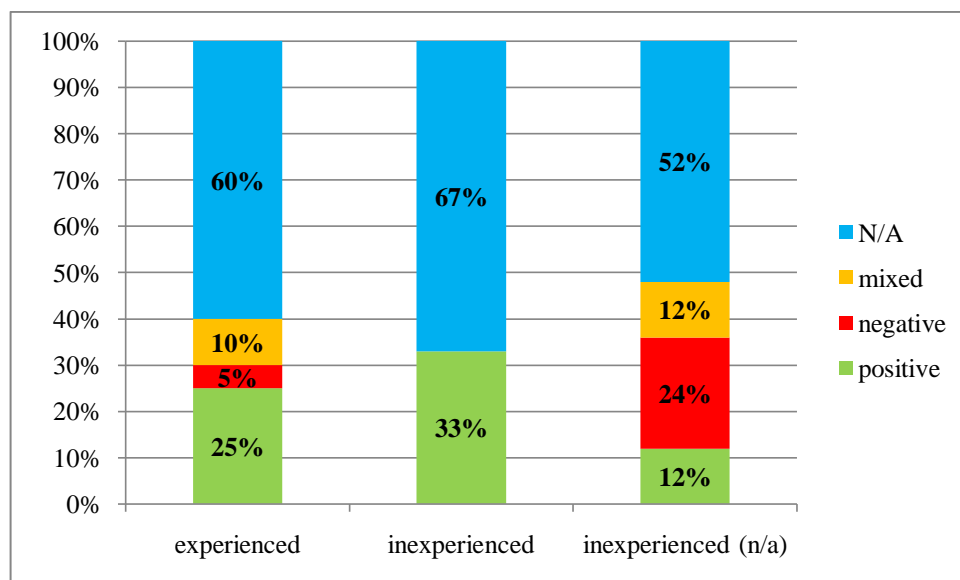
Figure 4.19 Average evaluation of soft skills related to student motivation



The role of teaching experience on the development of skills related to student motivation is questionable as well as it was with the previous topic. Although there was hardly any difference concerning the number of comments between the experienced and inexperienced trainees, there was a significant difference in the evaluation of the topic. The comments of trainees from Group 1 and 2 very largely positive, whereas negative comments in Group 3 prevailed, accounting for half of all (see Figure 4.20).²⁴³ The reasons for this could be, like in the case of student discipline and teacher authority, the amount of teaching experience and more importantly, the ability to apply reflective skills effectively. The second reason appears to be crucial, as the level of student motivation is heavily dependent on the teacher's ability to 'read' students' reactions and reflect on their needs.

²⁴³ For further information on group description see Chapter 3 Aims, methodology and resource materials, Teaching practice and resource materials.

Figure 4.20 Average evaluation of soft skills related to student motivation in correlation with teaching experience



Trainees' comments

When students' needs are not met with what is being done in the class, it has a negative effect on student discipline.²⁴⁴ Student motivation appears to be the other side of the same coin. Like student discipline, student motivation differs with the age of students. Younger and less advanced students have different needs than their older and more advanced counterparts. "Children of this age like competitions... Games bring positive contribution into lessons at any age, particularly, when students are about 11-13 years old. Games motivate students, they want to win..."²⁴⁵ This comment on younger students was given by an inexperienced trainee, but a very similar experience was gained by an experienced trainee as well: "As to the younger students, most of them are kind, honest, active and bright... These young pupils like all kinds of games and competitions."²⁴⁶ This strategy for raising student motivation wasn't successful with older students.

The motivation of older students was rather based on longer-term goals, which made them more diligent. "Some students (especially the older ones, most in the final

²⁴⁴ See Section 4.2.2 Student discipline and teacher authority, Discipline vs. friendly atmosphere.

²⁴⁵ Petra K. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

²⁴⁶ Martina Č. (Group 1: experienced)

year) start to realize the importance of the language. Also the vision of FCE practice is more than just mere exercises: for them it's a challenge with a tangible result."²⁴⁷ The older students might not have been as disruptive as the younger ones, but were much harder to motivate when it came to being active during a lesson: "...the opposite must be said of the older ones. My group tends to be almost too quiet and passive... Obviously, I must try harder to motivate them."²⁴⁸

Another issue concerned the balance of time dedicated to grammar and speaking activities. "You can't do challenging tasks if the students struggle with every single sentence they try to produce. So I think the so-called "boring" and "uninteresting" monotonous exercises are sometimes necessary for the students to get some basics."²⁴⁹ However, as one trainee mentioned in relation to student discipline, today's children inevitably react to how the world is changing and teacher's task is to make effort to understand them.²⁵⁰ This brings us to another comment on the amount of grammar in a lesson in relation to student motivation. The trainee perceived the issue in a broader social context: "In reality ninety per cent of students are really keen to learn the language. They are aware of the necessity of mastering English in today's world. Thanks to the internet and the media, they encounter it almost every day in some form and of course they see how difficult it is for them to actually communicate. And since in real communication you don't care much about grammar, their feeling of alienation and the abyss between what school gives them and what they need and want becomes bigger."²⁵¹ This comment is a good example of the application of reflective skills, this time with students' needs being in the centre of interest. Reflective skills appear to be an essential condition for a teacher to be able to react to students' needs.

The ability to reflect on students' needs is not easy, but apparently possible to be developed, as documented in this case: "Although I had the impression that the class as a whole had mastered the topic and that getting back to it would only make them bored, I wasn't able to recognize that some of them still didn't understand it. This was a

²⁴⁷ Anna W. (Group 2: inexperienced)

²⁴⁸ Martina Č. (Group 1: experienced)

²⁴⁹ Eva H. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

²⁵⁰ See Section 4.2.2 Student discipline and teacher authority, English teacher training approaches as reflected in relation to student discipline and teacher authority.

²⁵¹ Veronika V. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

valuable experience for me.”²⁵² Being able to reflect on students’ performance and progress emerged to be another motivating factor: “I have learnt that frequent feedback for the students helps them. I should evaluate their work as often as possible. Especially young learners need frequent feedback. Otherwise, they are not motivated.”²⁵³

In relation to hard skills, the appropriateness of the level of a textbook was seen as one of the factors influencing class management.²⁵⁴ The trainees experienced the effect of using a textbook of an inappropriate level also in connection to student motivation. Some trainees discovered that the students weren’t motivated because the textbook was too easy for them. This proved to be the main reason why there was a much higher proportion of negative comments. In a way, this also speaks about how autonomous trainees can or can’t be in their teaching practice when it comes to the choice of lesson content.

Finally, let me cite a comment by an inexperienced trainee, which explicitly describes the challenge which teachers of today’s children should seek to answer: “I also do feel a sort of sorry for that change in attitude I saw as the students grow up. The natural children's curiosity to explore the world around us is being replaced by boredom, passivity and satiety. To what extent are the children to be blamed and to what extent is our educational system to be blamed?”²⁵⁵

English teacher training approaches as reflected in relation to student motivation

Both the applied science model and the reflective model deal with the issue of student motivation in more detail in comparison with the previous two topics – class management and student discipline and teacher motivation. The applied science model refers to a research, which proved that English language learners who have personal reasons and motivation achieve better results (integrative motivation) than those who

²⁵² Josef V. (Group 1: experienced), as translated by Tomáš Holý.

²⁵³ Zdeňka E. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

²⁵⁴ See Section 4.1.1 Class management, Variety in the level of English and the level of textbooks.

²⁵⁵ Eva H. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

learn just for the sake of finishing their studies and getting a job (instrumental motivation).²⁵⁶ This is in line with some of the trainees comments mentioned above.

However, the reflective model refers to the same research as does the applied science model and points out an important fact. A vast majority of learns are, in fact, somewhere in between those two concepts of motivation. Thus it is rather important to learn to understand motivation in its complexity and in real situations.²⁵⁷ According to the experience of some trainees, this was exactly the case. Their comments illustrated that reflective skills are an essential condition for a teacher to be able to recognize and understand students' needs and interests. Both models also provide trainees with practical exercises on student motivation designed either for microteaching lessons or for observations.

Summary

The disproportion in the evaluation of skills between the experienced and inexperienced trainees was primarily caused by an objective reason. Most of the inexperienced trainees whose evaluation was negative explained the lack of student motivation by an inappropriate level of the textbook, which had not been their choice. Other than that, reflective skills proved to make a difference also in relation to this teaching area. The trainees who were able to make a constructive use of reflective skills managed to realize students' needs more successfully and react to them accordingly. This appears to be the second major reason for the disproportion.

Some trainees reflected on differences in motivation with younger and older students. Younger students were more motivated by short-term interests (e.g. games, competitions), whereas older students were rather motivated by long-term interests (e.g. school-leaving exam, university studies, better job prospects). Both teacher training approaches proved to be beneficial for trainees in this respect. The difference between younger and older students, as described by trainees, relates to the concept of instrumental and integrative motivation. Trainees seemed to have benefited from this distinction. However, it proved to be inaccurate and misleading in some cases, which

²⁵⁶ Harmer 8.

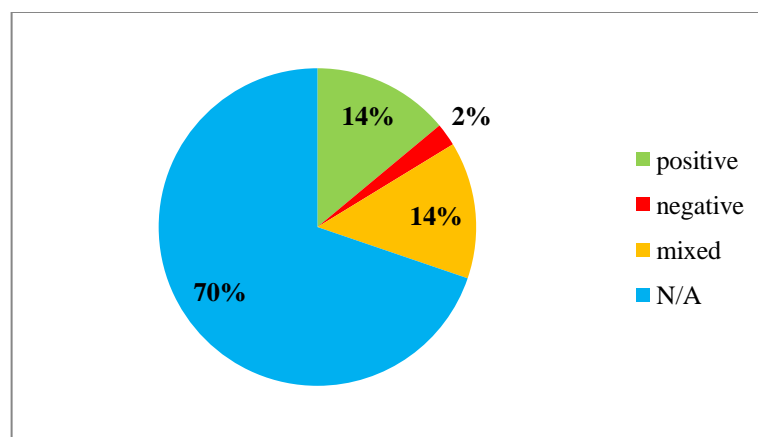
²⁵⁷ Wajnryb 31.

the trainees with better reflective skills were able to cope with significantly better than the others.

4.2.4 Age of students

Although the topic received comments from 30 per cent of all trainees, it was not seen as problematic with only one trainee giving a negative evaluation (see Figure 4.21). The topic relates to those soft skills, which help teachers to react effectively to the specifics of various ages and stages of development among students. The second placement of the teaching practice, which we are dealing with, took place at upper secondary schools. The first placement took place at lower secondary schools. On the whole, most of the trainees²⁵⁸ were able to get to teach students of all ages in secondary education.

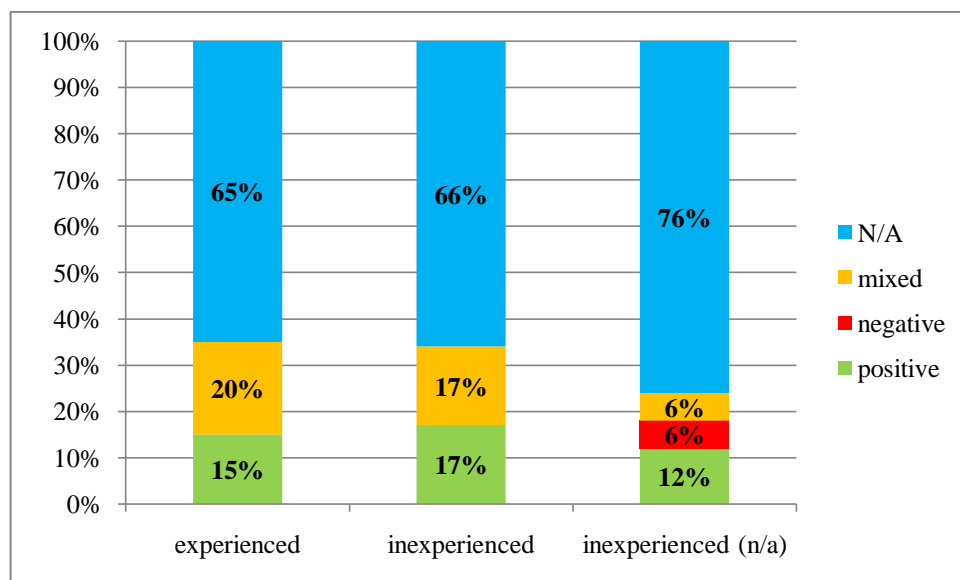
Figure 4.21 Average evaluation of soft skills related to age of students



The amount of teaching experience appears to have been irrelevant, as shown in Figure 4.22. The degree of interest assigned to the topic by either of the groups was very similar and so was the proportion between mixed, negative and positive comments.

²⁵⁸ It is important to keep in mind that a certain number of the experienced trainees carried out their teaching practice elsewhere, under the condition of teaching young adults (e.g. language schools, summer camps).

Figure 4.22 Average evaluation of soft skills related to age of students in correlation with teaching experience



Trainees' comments

The comments on this topic were analyzed in the two previous sections.²⁵⁹ For that reason, let me only summarize what specifically the comments referred to. Most of the comments dealing with the age of students were put it in relation with student discipline and student motivation. As I have suggested earlier, these are two sides of the same coin. When the trainees did not manage to motivate students effectively, it resulted in the lack of student discipline.

For some trainees, it was harder to motivate and maintain discipline with younger students, as they were described as being sometimes too lively, talkative and thus disturbing. On the other hand, the trainees who were successful with younger students praised their liveliness, cooperativeness, and genuine interest. The older students were generally considered to be harder to motivate. Their interest resulted from the need to focus more on long-term goals and thus reacted less positively to games and competitions.

²⁵⁹ See Section 4.2.2 Student discipline and teacher authority, Students' age and level of English and Section 4.2.3 Student motivation, Trainees' comments.

Also, some of the experienced trainees who had had positive experience with teaching adults realized that with children and young adults, it is more challenging for a teacher to motivate students and make them disciplined and hard-working at the same time. Some of their conclusions excluded the possibility of teaching children in the future and rather focused on working with adults, as adults usually have their own inner motivation and goals set.

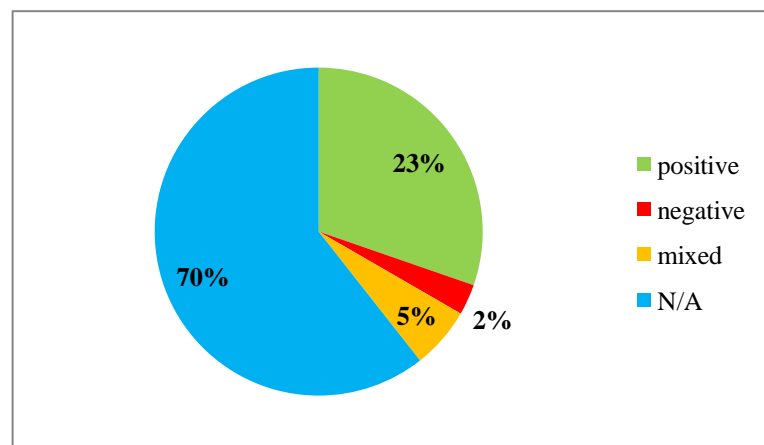
Summary

The amount of experience did not prove to have any effect on how the trainees managed to handle the effects and specifics of the age of students. The only difference between the experienced and inexperienced trainees was that some of the experienced ones would give preference to teaching adults for two reasons. The trainees had been successful teaching adults and found out that teaching children or young adults is more difficult, especially in terms of student discipline and motivation. In addition, the trainees with better reflective skills were more successful in recognizing students needs and interests, which resulted in better student motivation as well as student discipline.

4.2.5 Teacher motivation

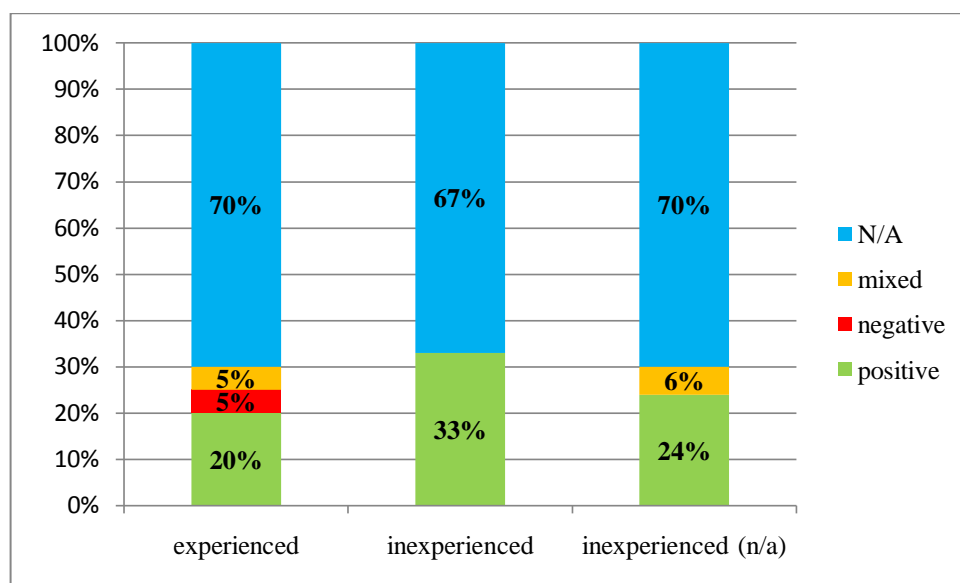
The last topic to be discussed in the section dedicated to soft skills is teacher motivation. Of all the trainees, 30 per cent gave a comment on their motivation to become a teacher. The vast majority of the comments were positive, as shown below.

Figure 4.23 Average evaluation of soft skills related to teacher motivation



Similarly to the previous topic, the amount of teaching experience did not prove to be influential on teacher motivation. Each of the three groups of trainees received almost the same evaluation and amount of attention as did the others.

Figure 4.24 Average evaluation of soft skills related to teacher motivation in correlation with teaching experience



Trainees' comments

There were several motivational factors mentioned by the trainees. Some experienced trainees liked a certain autonomy a teacher has, which provides the opportunity to be creative and not bound by regulations and instructions. Ironically, some trainees praised the fact of being able to choose teaching materials themselves, but there was also one who had exactly the opposite experience: "I didn't enjoy working with it [a Czech textbook] and in most cases I reached out for some Oxford or Cambridge publication of my own. Paradoxically enough, students liked the Czech book. They didn't believe that using a foreign textbook is more effective even at the elementary level... After two semesters I gave up on this teaching practice."²⁶⁰ She also mentioned some other reasons why she had left the job: no library for teachers, no benefits, and little money. We might expect these reasons to be important especially for trainees with teaching experience from a number of language schools. The conditions at

²⁶⁰ Š. V. (Group 1: experienced)

state schools are not so varied to be a decisive factor for a teacher to choose a school. However, they can be hardly ignored.

The profession of a teacher is psychologically very demanding, which might have a negative effect on teacher motivation, like in the case of the following comment: “My enthusiasm for secondary education has diminished a little, but it is still very attractive for me, on condition that I will improve my teaching motivation in difficult classes and that I will work more on the communication even with the students that I personally don’t like.”²⁶¹ The question of ‘difficult’ classes and its role on motivation was already discussed.²⁶² For some trainees, the outcome was rather negative in terms of motivation to become a teacher: “It was almost unbearable, I couldn’t concentrate and I don’t know whether I can be a teacher if I imagine working all days with students like this one.”²⁶³ Not only lack of student discipline can be a problem. As another trainee noted, it is sometimes very difficult for a teacher to stop thinking about school and teaching when there is time to go home and relax. “I think that being able to ‘unwind’ and maintain mental hygiene is especially important in teacher’s profession.”²⁶⁴ The trainee also stressed the importance of being open to self-development while staying principled and hard-working.

Self-development was another motivational factor which received a good deal of attention in trainees’ comments. The experienced trainees who had been teaching advanced students liked the fact that it helps to improve their own language skills. As regards the inexperienced trainees, one trainee expressed worries about losing motivation in the long term: “I’m persuaded I would like it and enjoy it [teaching at grammar school full time], but I also feel there are a few things I would be afraid of: I’d be afraid of finding my ‘ideal’ way of teaching and not being flexible anymore. I would be afraid of having my strategies and my ways of doing things and losing creativity. I would also be afraid of forgetting good English and not improving my own language skills. I’d be afraid of the burn-out syndrome. I think I’d get mad if I didn’t meet new people, didn’t try new things, if I had worked in the same small building with the same

²⁶¹ Tereza Č. (Group 1: experienced)

²⁶² See Section 4.2.2 Student discipline and teacher motivation, Teacher authority.

²⁶³ Dana B. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

²⁶⁴ Lenka H. (Group 2: inexperienced), as translated by Tomáš Holý.

people for 30 years.”²⁶⁵ The comment is valuable for its comprehensive description of what actually happens to many teachers. One of the reasons for such worries were some of her conversations with the teachers at the school of her teaching practice.

Positive feedback from students, either direct or indirect, was also among the most motivating factors: “Teaching requires a lot of time spent by preparation and looking for materials. But it is worth doing. The biggest award is to observe students enjoying an activity that is also useful to them.”²⁶⁶ Or like in the case of another inexperienced trainee: “The best reward for me was when some of the students appreciated the way of my teaching, stating it spontaneously in the corridor.”²⁶⁷ Not only did the teaching practice provide trainees with the opportunity to experience such beautiful teaching moments, but as whole revived what was otherwise fading motivation with some students. For some, the teaching practice itself was extremely motivating: “I noticed that I felt happy, that I was finally doing something meaningful and useful. That was my own life with no university to remind me of undone seminar papers, exams etc. I don't want to study anymore. What we learn at school is almost useless for my future teaching career. Why do I have to write a diploma thesis? Who is interested in it? I want to teach.”²⁶⁸

Summary

The amount of teaching experience did not have any effect on the trainees' evaluation of the topic. Nevertheless, there was a difference between the experienced and inexperienced trainees. The experienced ones who had had a positive experience with teaching adults usually preferred it to teaching children or young adults, as it is not as demanding in terms of student motivation and student discipline. Problems with discipline were discouraging especially for the trainees with worse reflective skills. Also, the question of self-development as a motivational factor was raised by several trainees. Those referring to teaching adults mentioned the possibility to improve their own language skills as motivating. One trainee referring to teaching at secondary

²⁶⁵ Eva H. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

²⁶⁶ Jitka P. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

²⁶⁷ Silvie Š. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

²⁶⁸ H. S. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

schools expressed worries about the possibilities of self-development at a state school and the risk of losing the ability and motivation to get better (the burn-out syndrome).

On the other hand, students' success and positive feedback were seen as rewarding and motivating. The experience from the teaching practice was also another positive motivational factor. All in all, the comments were largely positive. No reference to the teacher training approaches in relation to teacher motivation could be made, as neither of the approaches deals with the issue.

4.3 General comments on teaching practice

In this section I analyze the trainees' comments which concerned the teaching practice itself and comments which concerned the role of a mentor during the practice. Both topics received positive reactions and their effect on the development of trainees' professional competence was generally beneficial.

Mentor

Essentially, the role of the mentor represents the craft model – one of the three teacher training approaches the trainees had been involved in. The model's assets and limits were discussed in more detail earlier.²⁶⁹ As I have said, the comments concerning the mentor were generally positive.

The trainees praised the fact that their mentor provided them with information about the specifics concerning students, textbooks, classrooms, colleagues, school, etc. "Before the beginning of the practice, the supervisor teacher gave me very detailed information about the groups of students I was going to teach, which I found extremely helpful."²⁷⁰ There was another asset mentioned which helped trainees to get prepared to teach: "I was glad that I was allowed to visit classes of more than one teacher. It

²⁶⁹ See Chapter 2, Section 2.2.

²⁷⁰ Zdeňka E. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

surprised me how different was the same lesson in two groups. I enjoyed observations... I even observed more lessons than was necessary.”²⁷¹

During the practice, mentors helped trainees to realize why some aspects of their lessons did not work well. The feedback based on mentor’s experience was beneficial especially for the inexperienced trainees: “With the help of my supervisor I realized some of the weaker points of my teaching style and I gradually limited them. One of the most frequent one is my giving too much attention to the individual.”²⁷² Besides mentor’s experience, it was also emotional support which proved to be very helpful for trainees who had been nervous about their teaching practice before it started. In addition, some trainees had arranged their teaching practice to take place at their former secondary school, which was emotionally supportive as well: “I was glad I know the school. It provided me with a soothing feeling at the nervous beginning of my teaching practice... I like her [mentor] very much and she made my stay at the school incredibly pleasant. I had my chair, my table, my space. I felt as if I already was part of the teaching team of the school.”²⁷³

On the other hand, the limits of the craft model emerged mainly with some of the experienced trainees. One of the problems was that the students were used to working in the style of their teacher (mentor), which was in some cases in contradiction with the teaching style of the trainee: “It seemed to me that it would be a nonsense to spend two weeks creating new ways of doing things and eventually disappearing for good and leaving behind a messed up class. The heritage of the mentor was as follows: class management and explanations of new topics almost only in Czech. No group work and almost no pair work...”²⁷⁴

Overall, the role of the mentor proved to be beneficial, especially for the inexperienced trainees, as it compensated for the trainees’ lack of experience. The experienced ones were rather grateful for being able to teach in their already developed teaching style, like in the following example: “The teacher I worked with was quite

²⁷¹ Markéta K. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

²⁷² Bohdana P. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

²⁷³ H.S. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

²⁷⁴ Josef V. (Group 1: experienced), as translated by Tomáš Holý..

fine, only she seemed to be fighting with the students a little bit. Therefore I felt better when I was left with the class alone.”²⁷⁵

Teaching practice

General comments on the teaching practice were largely positive like in the case of the mentor. The practice helped the inexperienced trainees to overcome nervousness and bad feelings stemming from their inexperience with teaching: “I’ve never stand in front of the whole class, except the teaching practice last year. So it was a strange feeling for me at first but then I got used to it.”²⁷⁶ For some, it was even more than just to overcome a ‘strange feeling’. Their inexperience resulted in the fear of teaching: “Before the whole circle of practical weeks started last year, I was literally petrified.”²⁷⁷ This trainee continues with her comment to depict the tremendously positive influence the practice had on her as a teacher: “I think that this one of the most beautiful things about teacher's job - you are in touch with young people and although it is a tiring and a very badly paid job, when you step in a classroom to teach, knowing that the class is good working, of course, it helps you to survive even a very bad day. This is also the main reason why I am not petrified anymore with the idea of stepping in front of a class full of adolescents and why I am now able to imagine myself actually teaching in the future. And I believe this development I have gone through – from a nervous and trembling student to a self-confident and almost-ready-to-go teacher in preparation – is the most fantastic result and conclusion of my practical weeks.” For some trainees the practice was a decisive factor to actually become teachers after finishing their studies.

Many other positive comments were more specific about which aspects of the teaching process the trainees had managed to improve. However, there were also negative comments, mostly concerning the length of the practice: “I think that 14 days is a short time for a trainee to create a complex view of how the school operates, relatively complicated relationships with students and colleagues, and other related aspects. Every teacher has her or his own teaching style and it requires some time for students to get used to it... But even this experience is worth it and more beneficial than

²⁷⁵ Sylvie M. (Group 1: experienced)

²⁷⁶ Lucie D. (Group 2: inexperienced)

²⁷⁷ Hana S. (Group 3: inexperienced (n/a))

theorizing about it in seminars. The perspective from behind a teacher's desk is significantly different from the perspective from the student's desk.”²⁷⁸

In summary, the teaching practice was highly praised by the vast majority of the trainees. However, most of them also criticized the relatively short length of the practice, as it did not allow them to develop in the full complexity of what the teacher's profession requires.

²⁷⁸ Lenka H. (Group 2: inexperienced), as translated by Tomáš Holý.

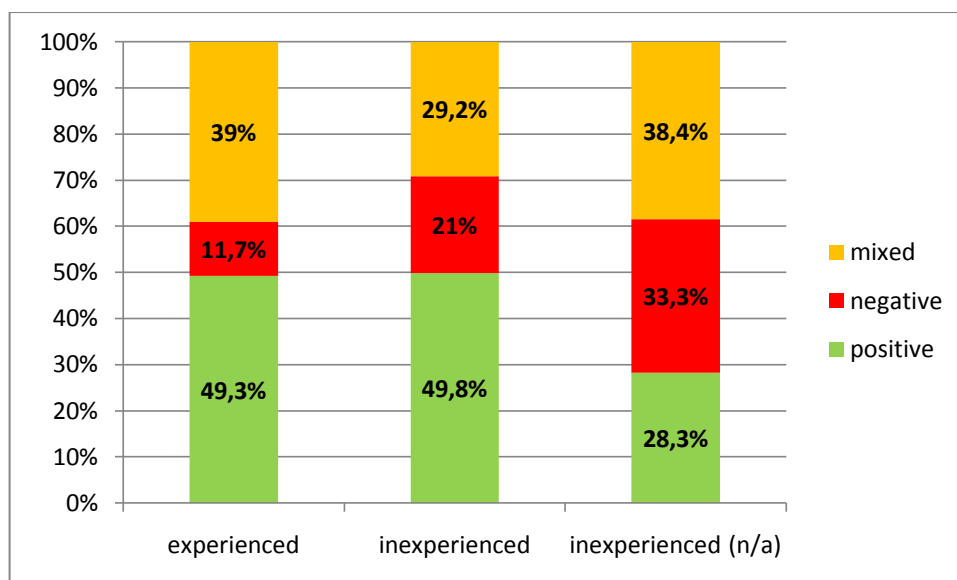
Chapter 5

Findings

Teaching experience

The average evaluation of the teaching skills which the trainees mentioned in their written reflections on their teaching practice shows differences in correlation with the amount of previous teaching experience (see Figure 5.1). The experienced trainees' comments were negative in only 11.7 per cent of all, whereas in the case of the two remaining groups of inexperienced trainees the number was significantly higher. Greater teaching experience proved to be beneficial for the development of teaching skills.

Figure 5.1 Average evaluation of teaching skills (hard skills and soft skills)



Interestingly, there was also a good deal of difference between the two groups of inexperienced trainees. The first one of the two consists of trainees who reflected on the fact of having no previous teaching experience. The interpretative analysis of trainees' comments revealed that these trainees demonstrated better reflective skills in their

comments than the second group of trainees who did not make any reference to their own previous teaching experience. Reflective thinking appeared to be decisive especially in relation to unexpected or problematic teaching situations. This is the major reason why those with reflective thinking had a lower number of negative comments, despite both groups being inexperienced.

Moreover, there was even a bigger difference regarding positive comments. While the experienced trainees and the inexperienced with generally better reflective skills gave positive comments in almost a half of the cases, the inexperienced who demonstrated worse reflective skills had a significantly lower number of positive teaching experiences in their teaching practice. The interpretative analysis pointed to two reasons for this. The first one was the positive effect of greater amount of teaching experience on the part of the experienced group of trainees and the second was that those trainees with better reflective skills reacted to unexpected situations in class more flexibly and managed to make adjustments accordingly, which led to positive outcomes. Those trainees who did not demonstrate reflective thinking often held on to their lesson plans and teaching preconceptions brought over from their university seminars of didactics and methodology. When they faced a problematic situation which did not have a clear cause, their conclusions pointed to the fact that in such cases nothing can be done and it's only a matter of being emotionally sound enough to withstand it.

Generally, the analysis proved that the trainees with a greater amount of teaching experience were more successful in their teaching practice. Thus the amount of teaching experience has a significantly positive effect on the development of teacher competence. However, what emerged to be essential in this respect was the strong effect of reflective skills. These skills were a decisive factor of how effectively the trainees handled unexpected teaching situations and how they managed to learn and improve from their teaching practice.

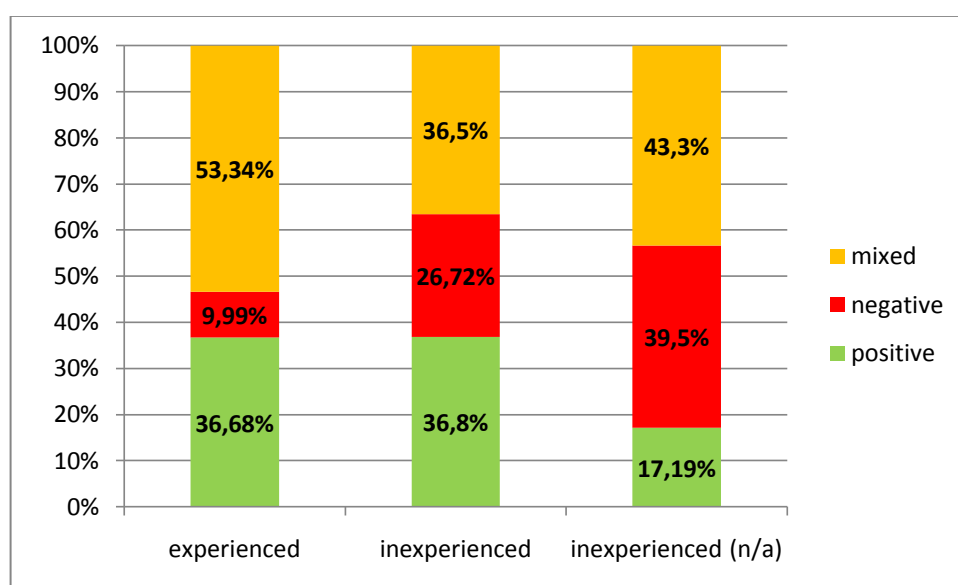
Teacher training approaches

One of the assumptions before the analysing process was that hard skills, which were defined as generally those which are observable and measurable, would be evaluated similarly by all trainees regardless their amount of previous teaching

experience. The assumption was supported by the fact that the applied science model, being one of those the trainees had been involved in, focuses on the development of individual hard skills as they had been empirically researched in the past and theoretical outcomes on what and how teacher trainees should learn were made. The reflective model was expected to be less influential and rather to be helpful as a coordinating element of hard skills. The inexperienced trainees hadn't had a chance to make a full use of what the reflective model offers as the model presupposes a continuous teaching practice to be reflected on in university seminars of didactics and therefore were reliant primarily on what they had learnt thanks to the applied science model.

The results of the analysis of hard skills were surprising. There were big differences in the evaluation of hard skills between the experienced and inexperienced trainees (see Figure 5.2). The experienced trainees had negative experience with hard skills in only ten per cent of all cases. Among the inexperienced trainees, the effect of reflective thinking proved to be beneficial. This was also documented by the numbers of positive comments among all three groups of trainees. Nonetheless, the evaluation of hard skills by all inexperienced trainees was generally far more negative than with the experienced trainees. The interpretative analysis of hard skills pointed to several reasons for this.

Figure 5.2 Average evaluation of hard skills



The applied science model uses the process of lesson planning to compensate for the lack of complexity of realistic contexts in seminars of didactics. Lesson plans should include all possible aspects of a lesson, including time plan. This proved to be the key factor of why there were such significant differences in the evaluation of hard skills. Time planning was the most problematic issue of all among the inexperienced trainees. Due to the lack of teaching experience, they were not able to make realistic estimations of how much time should be dedicated to each part of a lesson. Consequently, many other aspects of their lessons were negatively influenced by this, especially class management, which was otherwise the most frequently commented topic. Some trainees tried to cope with problems in class by paying more attention to their lesson planning. As a result, many of them became frustrated by spending hours preparing a 45-minute lesson plan without clearly positive outcomes. Nevertheless, for some trainees lesson plans served as an emotional support to deal with the nervousness connected with inexperience.

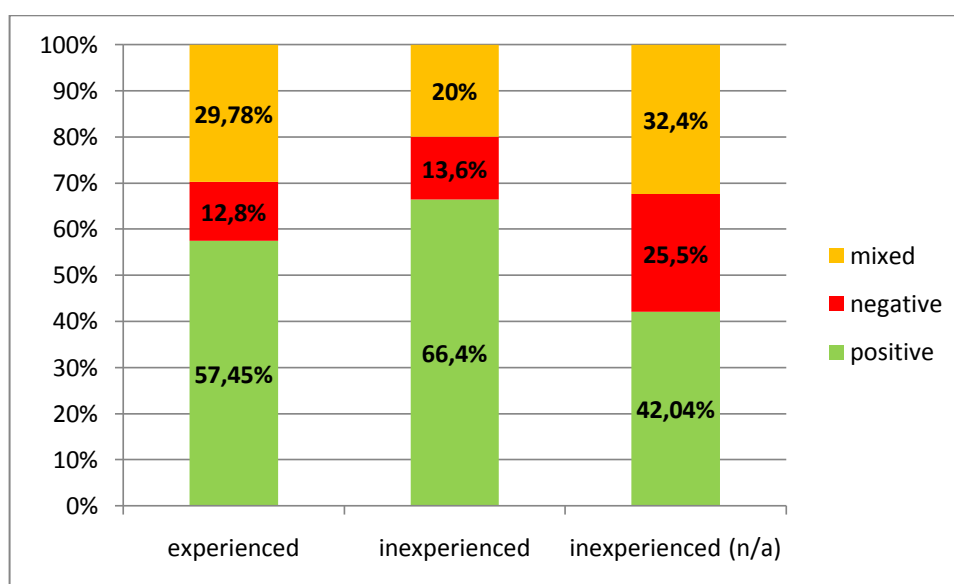
The major finding in the analysis of hard skills is that the applied science model was not able to be beneficial for trainees on its own. Teaching skills practised individually in seminars in combination with thorough lesson plans failed to recognize and simulate the complexity of real teaching situations. The role of the reflective model as a coordinating element of hard skills proved to be essential for successful development of teacher competence.

As far as soft skills are concerned the role of teacher training approaches was different. Neither of the two approaches the trainees had been involved in at university deals sufficiently with the issues related to soft skills. While the issues of class atmosphere and student motivation are taken into account to some extent, the issues of student discipline, teacher authority and teacher motivation are omitted. The interpretative analysis showed that personal characteristics of a trainee are the key factor. The amount of previous teaching experience did not prove to have had any significant effect on the development of soft skills (see Figure 5.3).

Besides personal characteristics of a trainee, reflective skills proved to be important especially in relation to the topic of student discipline and teacher authority.

What emerged to be decisive was not the natural authority of a teacher, as had been assumed by some trainees. More important was the fact whether students' needs were sufficiently met by a trainee or not. Those trainees who were able to successfully reflect students' needs in their lessons were much more successful in maintaining student discipline. On the other hand, in some cases, the situations in which trainees failed to successfully reflect students' needs escalated to a point where the trainees were emotionally so disturbed that they started considering giving up their own aspirations to become a teacher. This might explain the little difference in the evaluation of soft skills with the second group of inexperienced trainees.

Figure 5.3 Average evaluation of soft skills



The analysis of soft skills revealed many issues which are not dealt with by either of the teacher training approaches. The need of trainees to reflect on these issues was clearly articulated and at the same documented that professional support would have been beneficial for them in this respect.

The teaching practice provided students with yet another form of teacher training – the craft model. The mentor's role was perceived positively especially by the inexperienced trainees. Generally, the mentor helped them to interpret teaching situations, give advice on teaching techniques or specifics of a class and compensate for the trainee's lack of experience. However, some of the experienced trainees had

negative experience with their mentor. The reason was mainly differences in teaching styles, as the experienced trainees wanted to teach in their own already developed teaching styles. In such cases, they were not satisfied with the teaching practice, as it did not help them to improve but rather pushed them to teach in ways they generally disagree with.

General comments on the teaching practice were largely positive. The chance to eventually put in practice what they had been preparing for so hard during their studies and also the chance to meet and work with real students was a huge motivating factor for further development of their teaching careers. There was also a strong correspondence among trainees regarding the length of the teaching practice, which was criticised as being too short. For example, the length and form of the teaching practice prevented trainees from practising student assessment techniques, which is a serious flaw, since this is a major aspect of teaching. Also, the conditions in which trainees had practised microteaching in university seminars were not adequate to what the equipment of lower and upper secondary schools offer. As a result, trainees failed to make a use of audiovisual aids like overhead projectors or interactive whiteboards.

Chapter 6

Discussion

The findings of the research show that the two teacher training approaches in which the trainees of the Faculty of Education at Charles University were involved in during the seminars of English didactics and methodology are efficient when combined. The applied science model was beneficial especially for inexperienced trainees, as it offered practice of individual teaching skills and thorough guidance in lesson planning. However, when the trainees got to practice these skills in real situations during their teaching practice, the role of the reflective model emerged to be essential, as it had led trainees to develop reflective thinking and thus learn from experience. Reflective skills were also necessary for trainees to flexibly cope with unexpected situations in class. This finding is in accordance with some of the recent international findings discussed in Chapter 2.²⁷⁹

On the other hand, the reflective model is not self-sufficient, as trainees involved draw knowledge rather from experience than theoretical concepts. In the case of some of the inexperienced trainees, despite having preconceptions of their own, the theoretical preparation created a solid ground for further development. Another reason why the reflective model cannot fully replace the applied science model is the necessity of continuous teaching practice, which is not currently met in the case of the Faculty of Education. Also, an international research discussed in Chapter 2 shows the opposite situation in Sweden, where there is too much attention given to the reflective model and as a result, stirs the need for balance between the two approaches.²⁸⁰

What was surprising to a certain extent was to see the effect trainees' reflective skills had on student discipline. The trainees who managed to successfully deal with

²⁷⁹ "The ability of the subjects [teacher trainees] to use knowledge that was learned during teacher education was dependent on their ability to self-reflect." Ruohotie-Lyhty 305.

²⁸⁰ Hegender 166-167.

student discipline were able to flexibly reflect on students' needs and adjust their lessons accordingly. In contrast, the trainees who experienced problems with discipline were not able to reflect on students' needs. Consequently, the problems escalated and had a strong emotional impact on the trainees. Their reactions, which they also included in their reflections, were very negative and the trainees expressed serious doubts about whether they really wanted to become teachers. Unfortunately, this appears to be a global problem which we can expect to grow in its significance. As discussed in Chapter 2, today's world is rapidly changing, becoming culturally more and more diverse, many old universal truths are not valid any more, and children are only a reflection of this postmodern society. The trend appears to be that teachers experience difficulties to recognize and meet students' needs. In Australia, for example, high numbers of beginning teachers give up teaching within the first three years of employment.²⁸¹

Almost half of all trainees' comments were dedicated to the issues related to soft skills. The questions of relationship of teacher and students, students among themselves, motivation of students, and also mental hygiene of teachers received a great deal of attention. From the international perspective, as discussed in Chapter 2, the question of emotions of teachers has become one of the new subjects of research. The demands of today's world require a more open and active work with emotions in teaching than ever before. Neither of the two teaching approaches deals with teachers' emotions and as such are not able to address the trainees needs expressed in their reflections.

What the trainees explicitly criticised was the short length of the teaching practice. Especially for the inexperienced ones, two weeks was just a too short period of time to realize and get to understand the mass of new information gained. Besides, it was difficult to learn enough about students so that they could carry out effective class management and also, as mentioned above, recognize and meet students' needs. In this respect, the teaching practice failed to deliver what is so crucial about it and cannot be compensated in any other form. Moreover, such key aspects of teacher competence like student assessment and the use of up-to-date audiovisual technologies of today's

²⁸¹ Ure 461.

schools could not be carried out in such a short time. The length of the teaching practice at Czech faculties of education is criticised also by some major Czech experts.²⁸² In this respect, it appears to be important to keep in mind the situation in England. Since 1992, teacher education has become essentially school-based. The results were far from being ideal, as teaching experience itself is not enough in teacher preparation. A recent research shows that to make a good use of teaching practice, trainees need to be guided to develop reflective skills so that they are able to interpret teaching situations.²⁸³

The question of increasing the length of the teaching practice at Czech faculties of education will have to be considered in relation to three major factors. The most influential one is likely to be the financial side of it. In the case of Charles University, the Teaching Practice Centre of the Faculty of Education and its financial capabilities are decisive. However, as mentioned in Chapter 2, there have been relatively successful attempts of some of the Czech state universities to increase teacher trainees' time in schools. Internationally, it is common for teacher trainees to carry out their teaching practice in a much longer period of time than in our country and their models of teaching practice might be analyzed to discover possibilities for the Czech environment.

The second factor are the structural changes in higher education in the EU countries, including the Czech Republic, put in practice in 2010. Apart from the structural changes, there has been an increased focus on quality assurance of teacher education at the national level.²⁸⁴ As a part of the debates stirred by these changes should also be the length and form of teaching practice. It is clear that these changes can't be avoided. The question is what will be the outcome of this process in the Czech Republic.

Finally, it is important to take into account in-service teacher education as a complement of pre-service teacher education. Both areas of teacher education should work as a whole and thus should be designed as such. There should be a concord between innovative and standardizing processes in the development of both areas. Innovation can hardly be put in practice without being included in in-service teacher

²⁸² Spilková 235.

²⁸³ Ellis, *Impoverishing* 116-117.

²⁸⁴ Brebera 264-265.

education.²⁸⁵ Therefore, the question of changes in the structure of teaching practice at faculties of education is a very complex issue. However, it does not mean that it should be put off until some better times in the future.

²⁸⁵ Kohnová, Jana. *Další vzdělávání učitelů a jejich profesní rozvoj*. Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze – Pedagogická fakulta, 2004. 145.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

The combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods proved to be beneficial as the outcomes of the research provided clear and compact answers to the research questions. The amount of teaching experience had a significantly positive effect on the development of teaching skills. However, the ability to learn from teaching experience efficiently depended on trainees' reflective skills, in other words, the ability to interpret the meaning of teaching situations. Despite the assumption that each of the approaches would help to develop different teaching skills, the outcome was that the two approaches rather complemented each other and as such were efficient. Neither of them dealt sufficiently with teacher's emotions in spite of all the attention the topic received in trainees' comments.

Nevertheless, the reflective model would need a continuous teaching practice to be provided for the trainees, in order to be able to make a full use of its potential. The length of the teaching practice was perceived as insufficient by most of the trainees. In addition, the teaching practice was a motivating factor for the majority of trainees. However, for some of the trainees, the inability to cope with difficult teaching situations, especially those concerning student discipline, the effect was opposite and stirred serious doubts whether they really wanted to become teachers. The ability to reflect on teaching situations emerged to be a key factor for further professional development of the trainees.

The findings of the research are in accordance with current trends and results of research in teacher education, in the international as well as in the Czech context. The trainees faced more or less similar issues in their teaching practice as do their peers abroad. However, the length of the teaching practice is very short in comparison with

other European countries. This turned out to be a disadvantage especially for inexperienced trainees.

The interpretative analysis has its limitations, as the validity of interpreted facts might be influenced by the individuality of the researcher. In the case of this thesis, my personal experience with the same English language teacher training program helped me to reconstruct contexts of trainees' comments and thus to have a sufficient insight into their meanings. The question is whether the results would be the same if the research was done using the same methods by someone without the actual experience.

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Resumé

Práce se zabývá přístupy ke vzdělávání učitelů anglického jazyka. Předmětem výzkumu byly psané reflexe na pedagogickou praxi studentů učitelství pro základní a střední školy na katedře anglického jazyka a literatury Pedagogické fakulty Univerzity Karlovy v Praze. Cílem výzkumu bylo zjistit, který z přístupů ke vzdělávání učitelů (používaných v seminářích didaktiky a metodologie anglického jazyka) pomáhá v konfrontaci s praxí rozvíjet které učitelské kompetence. Jedním ze dvou přístupů byl „the applied science model“, který vychází zejména z empirických výzkumů a studentům předává prakticky zaměřené postupy, které se osvědčily v praxi. Druhým byl „the reflective model“, který vychází z reflexe studenta na vlastní praktickou zkušenost s výukou. Cílem tohoto přístupu je rozvinout ve studentech schopnost reflektivního myšlení, která je zásadní pro úspěšnou interpretaci situací ve výuce.

Výuka anglického jazyka je obor, který je v dnešní době na trhu práce velmi žádan. Z toho důvodu necelá polovina všech studentů zahrnutých do výzkumu měla své vlastní zkušenosti s výukou anglického jazyka. Větší polovina studentů neměla žádnou jinou zkušenost s výukou, než tu, kterou jim zprostředkovala pedagogická praxe v rámci studia. Porovnáním těchto dvou skupin bylo možno zkoumat vliv zkušenosti s výukou na rozvoj jednotlivých učitelských dovedností.

Komentáře ze studentských reflexí na pedagogickou praxi byly rozděleny do témat dle frekvence výskytu. V nich byly komentáře podrobeny kvantitativní analýze, která pomocí základních deskriptivních dat odhalila vliv na úspěšnost rozvoje jednotlivých učitelských dovedností, které studenti zmiňovali ve svých reflexích. Získané údaje sloužily jako podklad pro následnou hermeneutickou interpretaci vybraných komentářů. Cílem této fáze analýzy bylo zjistit, v kterých učitelských dovednostech byli studenti úspěšní a který z přístupů ke vzdělávání učitelů anglického jazyka k tomu přispěl. Výsledky byly porovnány se současnými trendy ve vzdělávání učitelů.

Analýza dat ukázala, že větší množství praktické zkušenosti s výukou anglického jazyka bylo velmi přínosné pro rozvoj kompetencí učitele. Překvapivým zjištěním byl významně pozitivní vliv reflektivních dovedností učitele na schopnost učit se ze zkušenosti. Reflektivní dovednosti se ukázaly jako klíčové také v situacích, které vyžadovali pochopení a reflexi potřeb studentů. Tyto situace se často týkaly problémům s chováním a disciplínou studentů.

U dvou zkoumaných přístupů ke vzdělávání učitelů anglického jazyka se ukázalo, že nejefektivnějších výsledků dosahují, pokud se navzájem doplňují. Zejména ‚the applied science model‘ byl zřetelně méně přínosný, pokud nebyl doplněn přístupem druhým. ‚The reflective model‘ pomáhá u studentů rozvíjet reflektivní dovednosti učitele, které jsou klíčové pro úspěšnou aplikaci teoretických poznatků v praxi. Významné množství komentářů se také týkalo emocí učitele. Ačkoliv se jedná o téma, které je předmětem současných výzkumů v mezinárodním kontextu, žádný ze sledovaných přístupů ke vzdělávání učitelů se tímto tématem téměř nezabývá.

Srovnání se současnými trendy ve vzdělání poukázalo na soulad většiny výsledků výzkumu s výzkumy jak u nás, tak v zahraničí. Ovšem studenti, kteří neměli možnost jiné praktické zkušenosti s výukou než v rámci studia, hodnotily své zkušenosti z praxe negativně v mnohem větší míře než studenti s větší praktickou zkušeností. Oproti jiným zemím, především těm v Evropské unii, je u nás délka pedagogické praxe výrazně kratší, což české studenty učitelství do značné míry znevýhodňuje v procesu studia ve srovnání z jejich zahraničními kolegy.